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THE

ANNOTATED EDITION

OF THE

ENGLISH POETS.

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BY

ROBERT BELL,

AUTHOR OF

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London: John W. Parker and Son, West Strand.

POETICAL WORKS

OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

EDITED BY ROBERT BELL

VOLUME III

LONDON
JOHN W. PARKER AND SON WEST STRAND
1855

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POEMS

OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

The Canterbury Tales.

THE SECOUNDE NONNES TALE.

[THIS tale, except the opening address to the Blessed Virgin, is literally translated from the *Legenda Aurea*, a collection of treatises on the festivals of the Church, written by Jacobus à Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa, in the latter end of the thirteenth century. The custom of collecting the *Acts* of the Martyrs—that is, the accounts of their martyrdom,—and reading them aloud in the Church on the anniversary of their death, for the encouragement of the faithful, was very early introduced. The *Acts of the Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Bishop of Ephesus, and a Disciple of the Apostle John, who suffered A.D. 168, have come down to us in this shape, and are much esteemed by divines of the Church of England, as the earliest authentic ecclesiastical record after the *Acts of the Apostles*. See Bingham's *Antiquities*, book xiii. c. 9. Saint Cecilia probably suffered in the reign of Alexander Severus, in the third century, as stated in her life. The acts of her martyrdom bear many internal evidences of authenticity, though disfigured by the false taste of the ecclesiastical rhetoricians of the fourth and fifth centuries, who probably introduced the miraculous circumstances and the dialogue between her and the prætor, just as Sallust and Robertson put imaginary speeches into the mouths of Catiline and Columbus.

Of Chaucer's accuracy in the delineation of the condition and habits of the early Christians, the catacombs still remain unimpeachable witnesses. These subterranean sepulchres, or 'seyntes buriels,' as they are called in the tale, were the refuge of the early Church of Rome, with its chief, Bishop Urban. Here, among the refuse of the people, the *fæx Romuli*, was concocted that mighty conspiracy against the established religion, which the philosophers and statesmen of Rome hardly knew whether to scorn or to fear. From its ghastly dwelling among the bones of the dead it occasionally emerged to gather its proselytes from the slave-gang, the senate, and the palace of Cæsar; until at length the patriots, the upholders of the political religion, under whose auspices Rome had gathered her laurels both in literature and arms, found themselves in a small but respectable minority; while the despised conspiracy had literally, as well as metaphorically, cut the ground from under their feet. From the moment when Christianity became a moving power in the state, the Roman nationality crumbled to pieces, superseded by the more comprehensive bond of Christian brotherhood. Of this tale, the language and versification, the only elements that properly belong to Chaucer, are marked with his usual force and pathos.]

THE minister and the norice unto vices,
Which that men clepe in Englisch ydelnesse,
The porter at the gates is of delicis;
To eschiewe, and by her contrary hire oppresse,
That is to say, by leful besynesse,
Wel oughte we to do al oure entente,
Lest that the fend thurgh ydelnesse us hente.[1]
For he that with his thousand cordes slye
Continuelly us wayteth to byclappe,
Whan he may man in ydelnes espye,

[1] The opening stanzas against idleness are taken from Jehan de Vignay's introduction to his French translation of the *Legenda Aurea*, which was probably Chaucer's original throughout.

He can so lightly cacche him in his trappe,
Til that a man be hent right by the lappe,
He is nought ware the fend hath him in honde;
Wel oughte we wirche, and ydelnes withstonde.
And though men dredde never for to deye,
Yet seen men wel by resoun douteles,
That ydelnes is rote of sloggardye,
Of which ther cometh never good encres;
And sin that slouth hem[1] holdeth in a lees,
Oonly to sleep, and for to ete and drynke,
And to devoure al that other swynke.
And for to put us from such ydelnes,
That cause is of so gret confusioun,
I have her doon my faithful busynes
After the legende in translacioun
Right of this glorious lif and passioun.
Thou with thi garlond, wrought with rose and lylye,[2]
The mene I, mayde and martir Cecilie;
And thou, that flour of virgines art alle,
Of whom that Bernard[3] lust so wel to write,
To the at my bygynnyng first I calle;
Thou comfort of us wrecches, do me endite
Thy maydenes deth, that wan thurgh hire merite

---

[1] *Hem* is adopted from Tyrwhitt as better than *he*, the reading of the Harl. MS.

[2] Symbolical of her bloody martyrdom and virgin purity. Thus in the metrical *Life of St. Werburgh*, by Bradshawe, a Benedictine of the sixteenth century:—

> 'Vyrgyns them folowed, *crowned with the lily*,
> Among whom our Lady chefe president was;
> Some *crowned with roses for their great victory*.'

[3] Saint Bernard's great work is a series of eloquent discourses on the Song of Solomon, which he interprets as prophetic of the incarnation of God the Son, the Bride being the blessed Virgin. She is said to have appeared to him in a vision, while he was engaged in the composition of these discourses, and, in answer to his prayer, *Monstra te esse matrem*, to have refreshed his emaciated frame with nourishment drawn from her bosom. This allegory forms the subject of a very beautiful woodcut prefixed to his Life in Jehan de Vignay's *Legende Dorée*, and of Murillo's celebrated picture.

Theternal lif, and of the feend victorie,
As man may after reden in hir storie.
Thou mayde and moder, doughter of thi sone,
Thow welle of mercy, synful soules cure,
In whom that God of bountes chees to wone;
Thou humble and heyh over every creature,
Thow nobelest so ferforth oure nature,
That no disdeyn the maker had of kynde
His sone in blood and fleissh to clothe and wynde.[1]
Withinne the cloyster of thi blisful sydes,
Took mannes schap the eternal love and pees,
That of the trine compas lord and guyde is,
Whom erthe, and see, and heven out of relees[2]
Ay herien; and thou, virgine wemmeles,
Bar of thy body, and dwellest mayden pure,
The creatour of every creature.
[3]Assembled is in the magnificence
With mercy, goodnes, and with such pitee,
That thou, that art the soune of excellence,
Not oonly helpist hem that prayen the,
But often tyme of thy benignite
Ful frely, er that men thin help biseche.
Thou gost biforn, and art her lyfes leche.
Now help, thou meke and blisful faire mayde,
Me flemed wrecche, in this desert of galle;
Thenk on the womman Cananee,[4] that sayde
That whelpes ete some of the crommes alle
That from her lordes table ben i-falle;

---

[1] The same thought occurs in the hymn of St. Ambrose, called the *Te Deum*. 'When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.'

[2] All the best MSS. concur in this reading, and therefore I have followed them, though I confess that I do not clearly understand the phrase; unless perhaps it mean, *without release*; without being ever released from their duty.—T. *Without relees* would seem to signify *without ceasing, sans relais*.

[3] Tyrwhitt remarks a similarity between this stanza and the fourth stanza of *The Prioress's Tale*.

[4] Harl. MS., *Canace*. Matt. xv.

And though that I, unworthy sone[1] of Eve,
Be synful, yet accepte my bileve.
And for that faith is deth withouten werkis,[2]
So for to werken give me witt and space,
That I be quit fro thennes that most derk is;
O thou, that art so fair and ful of grace,
Be myn advocat in that hihe place,
Ther as withouten ende is songe Osanne,
Thou Cristes moder, doughter deere of Anne.
And of thi light my soule in prisoun light,
That troubled is by the contagioun
Of my body, and also by the wight
Of everich lust and fals affeccioun;
O heven of refuyt,[3] o salvacioun
Of hem that ben in sorwe and in destresse,
Now help, for to my werk I wil me dresse.
Yet pray I you that reden that I write,
Forgeve me, that I doo no diligence
This ilke story subtilly to endite.
For bothe have I the wordes and sentence
Of him,[4] that at the seintes reverence
The story wroot, and folwen hir legende,
And pray yow that ye wol my werk amende.
First wol I yow the name of seint Cecilie[5]
Expoune, as men may in hir story se;
It is to say on Englisch, hevenes lilie,
For pure chastenesse of virginite;
Or for sche witnesse hadde of honeste

---

[1] The Nun is here made to call herself a *son* of Eve, an oversight which confirms the conjecture that this tale was originally intended for a separate piece.

[2] James ii. 17

[3] Haven of refuge.

[4] Jacobus à Voragine. See Introduction.

[5] Prefixed to each of the treatises in the *Legenda Aurea* is an explanation of the name of the festival or of the Saint, in the manner of the Jewish cabala. In this process of 'torturing one poor word ten thousand ways,' Cecilia is first supposed to be derived from *Cæli lilia*, the lily of heaven, next from *Cæci via*, a teacher of the blind, and then from *Cælum* and λαος the people, as being the heaven of the people of God.

And grene of conscience, and of good fame
The soote savour, lilie was her name.
Or Cecile is to say, the way of blynde,
For sche ensample was by way of techyng;
Or elles Cecily, as I writen fynde,
Is joyned by a maner conjoynynge
Of heven and *lya*, and here in figurynge
The heven is sette for thought of holynesse,
And *lya*, for hir lastyng besynesse.
Cecili may eek be seyd in this manere,
Wantyng of blyndnes, for hir grete light
Of sapience, and of thilke thewes cleere.
Or elles lo, this maydenes name bright
Of heven and *los* comes, for which by right
Men might hir wel the heven of peple calle,
Ensample of goode and wise werkes alle.
For *leos* peple in Englissh is to say;
And right as men may in the heven see
The sonne and moone, and sterres every way,
Right so men gostly in this mayden free
Seen of faith the magnanimite,
And eek the clernes hool of sapience,
And sondry werkes, bright of excellence.
And right so as these philosofres wryte,
That heven is swyft and round, and eek brennynge,
Right so was faire Cecily the whyte
Ful swyft and besy ever in good werkynge,
And round and hool in good perseverynge,
And brennyng ever in charite ful bright;
Now have I yow declared what sche hight.
This mayden bright Cecilie, as hir lyf saith,
Was comen of Romayns and of noble kynde,
And from hir cradel fostred in the faith
Of Crist, and bar his Gospel in hir mynde;
Sche never cessed, as I writen fynde,
Of hire prayer, and God to love and drede,
Byseching him to kepe hir maydenhede.[1]

[1] See vol. i. p. 207, note 2.

And whan this mayde schuld unto a man
Y-wedded be, that was ful yong of age,
Which that i-cleped was Valirian,
And day was comen of hir mariage,
Sche ful devout and humble in hir currage,
Under hir robe of gold, that sat ful faire,
Hadde next hir fleissh i-clad hir in an heire.
And whil the organs made melodie,
To God alloon in herte thus sang sche;
'O Lord, my soule and eek my body gye
Unwemmed, lest that I confounded be.'
And for his love that deyd upon a tre,
Every secound or thridde day sche faste,
Ay biddyng in hire orisouns ful faste.
The nyght cam, and to bedde most sche goon
With hir housbond, as oft is the manere,
And prively to him sche sayde anoon;
'O swete and wel biloved spouse deere,
Ther is a counseil, and ye wold it heere,
Which that right fayn I wold unto you saye,
So that ye swere ye schul it not bywraye.'
Valirian gan fast unto hir swere,
That for no caas ne thing that mighte be,
He scholde never mo bywreye hire;
And thanne at erst thus to him sayde sche;
'I have an aungel which that loveth me,
That with gret love, wher so I wake or slepe,
Is redy ay my body for to kepe;
'And if that he may felen, out of drede,[1]
That ye me touche or love in vilonye,
He right anoon wil sle you with the dede,
And in youre youthe thus schulde ye dye.
And if that ye in clene love me gye,
He wol yow love as me, for your clennesse,
And schewe to you his joye and his brightnesse.'

---

[1] In Harl MS. this line is omitted, and the next begins, *If ye me touche.*

Valirian, corrected as God wolde,
Answerde agayn: 'If I schal truste the,
Let me that aungel se, and him biholde;
And if that it a verray aungel be,
Than wol I doon as thou hast prayed me;
And if thou love another man, forsothe
Right with this swerd than wol I slee you bothe.'
Cecilie answerd anoon right in this wise;
'If that yow list, the aungel schul ye see,
So that ye trowe on Crist, and you baptise;
Goth forth to Via Apia,' quod sche,
'That fro this toun ne stant but myles thre,
And to the pore[1] folkes that ther duelle
Saith hem right thus, as that I schal you telle.
'Tell hem, I Cecilie yow unto hem sent,
To schewen yow the good Urban the olde,
For secre needes, and for good entente;
And whan that ye seint Urban[2] han byholde,
Tel him the wordes which that I to yow tolde;
And whan that he hath purged[3] you fro synne,
Than schul ye se that aungel er ye twynne.'
Valirian is to the place y-goon,
And right as him was taught by his lernynge,
He fond this holy old Urban anoon
Among the seyntes buriels lotynge;[4]
And he anoon withoute taryinge
Did his message, and whan that he it tolde,
Urban for joye his handes gan upholde.
The teres from his eyghen let he falle;
'Almyghty Lord, O Jhesu Crist,' quod he,
'Sower of chaste counseil, herde of us alle,

---

[1] The Christian religion was first, in almost all instances, received by the poor and unlearned, a fact foretold, but furnishing much subject of vituperation to its adversaries.

[2] See Introduction.

[3] *Scil.*, by baptism.

[4] *Louting* is from the Anglo-Saxon *lutan* or *lutian*, to lie hid. The historical accuracy of representing Urban as lying hid in the catacombs, or 'seyntes sepulchres,' gives an air of authenticity to these acts.

The fruyt of thilke seed of chastite
That thou hast sowe in Cecilie, tak to the;
Loo, like a busy bee withouten gyle
The serveth ay thin owne thral Cecile.
'For thilke spouse, that sche took right now
Ful lyk a fers lyoun, sche sendeth here
As meek as ever was eny lamb to yow.'
And with that word anoon ther gan appere
An old man, clad in white clothes clere,
That had a book with lettres of gold in honde,
And gan to-forn Valirian to stonde.
Valirian, as deed, fyl doun for drede,
Whan he him say; and he him up hente tho,
And on his book right thus he gan to rede;
'On Lord, o feith, oon God withouten mo,
On Cristendom, and oon fader of alle also,
Aboven alle, and over alle every where;'[1]
This wordes al with golde writen were.[2]
Whan this was red, than seide this olde man,
'Levest thou this thing or no? say ye or naye.'
'I leve al this thing,' quod Valirian,
'For sother thing than this, I dare wel saye,
Under the heven no wight thenken maye.'
Tho vanysched the old man, he nyste where,
And pope Urban him cristened right there.[3]
Valirian goth home, and fint Cecilie
Withinne his chambre with an aungel stonde.
This aungel had of roses and of lilie

---

[1] This description of the first lesson taught to the catechumen bears the stamp of the bold and simple dogmatic teaching which the primitive church opposed to the subtle cavils of the enlightened heathen. It is taken from Ephes. iv., where the ἓν βάπτισμα is translated 'on' (*i. e.* one), 'Cristendom.'

[2] Harl. MS., through an inadvertence easily accounted for by the repetition of the rhyme, omits the seven lines beginning with this line.

[3] The practice of at once baptizing the catechumen on his assenting to the true faith, as in this instance, appears from Scripture to have been the most ancient.—*Acts* viii. 36; xvi. 33.

Corounes tuo,[1] the which he bar in honde.
And first to Cecilie, as I understonde,
He gaf that oon, and after can he take
That other to Valirian hir make.
'With body clene, and with unwemmed thought,
Kepeth ay wel these corouns tuo,' quod he,
'Fro paradys to you I have hem brought,
Ne never moo ne schul they roten be,
Ne leese here swoote savour, trusteth me,
Ne never wight schal seen hem with his ye,
But he be chast, and hate vilonye.
'And thou Valirian, for thou sc. soone
Assentedist to good counseil, also
Say what the list, and thou schalt have thi boone.'
'I have a brother,' quod Valirian tho,
'That in this world I love no man so,
I pray yow that my brother may have grace
To knowe the trouthe, as I doo in this place.'
The aungel sayde, 'God liketh thy request,
And bothe with the palme of martirdom
Ye schullen come unto his blisful feste.'[2]
And with that word, Tiburce his brother com.
And whan that he the savour undernom,
Which that the roses and the lilies cast,
Withinne his hert he gan to wonder fast.
And sayde, 'I wondre this tyme of the yer,
Whennes this soote savour cometh so
Of rose and lilies, that I smelle her;
For though I had hem in myn hondes tuo,
The savour might in me no depper go.
The swete smel, that in myn hert I fynde,
Hath chaunged me al in another kynde.'

---

[1] See *ante*, p. 7, note 2.

[2] In this highly poetical thought, derived from Scripture, Chaucer has departed from his original, which says, simply, 'Vous viëdrez tous deux a nostre Seigneur par martyre.'

Valirian sayde, 'Tuo corouns have we,
Snow-whyt and rose-reed, that schinen cleere,
Whiche that thine eyghen han no might to see;
And as thou smellest hem thurgh my prayere,
So schalt thou seen hem, lieve brothere deere,
If it so be thou wilt withouten slouthe
Bilieven aright, and knowen verray trouthe.'
Tyburce answerde, 'Says thou thus to me
In sothenes, or in drem I herkne this?'
'In dremes,' quod Valirian, 'han we be
Unto this tyme, brother myn, I wys;
But now at erst in trouthe oure duellyng is.'
'How wost thou this,' quod Tyburce, 'and in what wise?'
Quod Valirian, 'That schal I the devyse.
'The aungel of God hath me trouthe y-taught,
Which thou schalt seen, if that thou wilt reneye
The ydols, and be clene, and elles nought.'
(And of the miracles of these corones tweye
Seynt Ambrose in his prefas list to seye;
Solempnely this noble doctour deere
Comendeth it, and saith in this maneere.
The palme of martirdom for to receyve,
Seynt Cecilie, fulfilled of Goddes gifte,
The world and eek hir chamber[2] gan sche weyve;
Witnes Tyburces and Cecilies shrifte,
To whiche God of his bounte wolde schifte
Corounes tuo, of floures wel smellynge,
And made his aungel home the croune brynge.
The mayde hath brought this men to blisse above;
The world[3] hath wist what it is worth certeyn,

[1] The elevation of thought and language displayed by Valerian after his conversion to Christianity is well imagined.

[2] She gave up the world and *her chamber*, that is marriage. The French is *despita le monde et ses delictz.*

[3] The world may by this know how great is the worth of devotion to chastity.

Devocioun of chastite to love.)[1]
Tho schewed him Cecilie al open and pleyn,
That alle ydoles nys but thing in veyn;
For thay ben doumbe, and therto they ben deve,
And chargeth him his ydoles for to leve.
'Who so that troweth not this, a best he is,'
Quod this Tyburce, 'if that I schal not lye.'
And sche gan kisse his brest that herde this,
And was ful glad he couthe trouthe espye;
'This day I take the for myn allye,'
Sayde this blisful faire mayde deere;
And after that sche sayde as ye may heere.
'Lo, right so as the love of Crist,' quod sche,
'Made me thy brotheres wyf, right in that wyse
Anoon for myn allye heer take I the,
Sin that thou wilt thyne ydoles despise.
Go with thi brother now and the baptise,
And make the clene, so that thou mowe biholde
The aungeles face, of which thy brother tolde.'
Tyburce answerde, and sayde, 'Brother dere,
First tel me whider I schal, and to what man.'
'To whom?' quod he, 'com forth with good cheere,
I wol the lede unto the pope Urban.'
'Til Urban? brother myn Valirian,'
Quod Tiburce, 'wilt thou me thider lede?
Me thenketh that it were a wonder dede.
'Ne menist thou nat Urban,' quod he tho,
'That is so ofte dampned to the deed,
And woneth in halkes[2] alway to and fro,
And dar nought oones putte forth his heed?
Men schold him brenne in a fuyr so reed,
If he were founde, or if men might him spye,
And we also to bere him companye.

[1] Tyrwhitt says that this parenthesis, which he supposes to have been interpolated from a gloss in the margin, is properly omitted in Caxton's translation of the *Legenda Aurea*, and thinks the same to be the case in Jehan de Vignay's *Leyende Dorée*; but he is mistaken, for it is found there.

[2] Dwells in corners, meaning the catacombs.

'And whil we seken thilke divinite,
That is i-hyd in heven prively,
Algate i-brent in this world schuld we be.'
To whom Cecilie answerde boldely,[1]
'Men mighten dreden wel and skilfully
This lyf to lese, myn oughne dere brother,
If this were lyvyng oonly and noon other.
'But ther is better lif in other place,
That never schal be lost, ne drede the nought;
Which Goddes sone us tolde thurgh his grace,
That fadres sone that alle thing hath wrought;
And al that wrought is with a skilful thought,
The gost, that from the fader gan procede,
Hath sowled hem withouten eny drede.
'By word and miracle hihe Goddes sone,
Whan he was in this world, declared heere,
That ther was other lyf ther men may wone.'
To whom answerde Tyburce, 'O suster deere,
Ne seydest thou right now in this manere,
Ther nys but oon God, o Lord, in sothfastnesse,
And now of thre how maystow bere witnesse?'
'That schal I telle,' quod sche, 'er that I go.
Right as a man hath sapiences thre,[2]
Memorie, engin, and intellect also,
So in oo being in divinite
Thre persones may ther right wel be.'
Tho gan sche him ful besily to preche
Of Cristes come,[3] and of his peynes teche,
And many pointes of his passioun;
How Goddes sone in this world was withholde
To doon mankynde pleyn remissioun,

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[1] Harl. MS., *bodyly*.

[2] This must be considered only as a loose illustration of the mystery of the Trinity; for perception, memory, and reason are only different powers or offices of the same soul, and the analogous doctrine with respect to the Trinity is Sabellianism.

[3] Tyrwhitt reads *sonde*, which would mean, 'what Christ sends.' '*Come*' means here 'coming,' and is the translation of '*l'advenement*.'

That was i-bounde in synne and cares colde.
Al this thing sche unto Tyburce tolde,
And after this Tiburce in good entente,
With Valirian to pope Urban he wente,
That thanked God, and with glad hert and light
He cristened him, and made him in that place
Parfyt in his lernynge, Goddes knyght.[1]
And after this Tiburce gat such grace,
That every day he say in tyme and space
The aungel of God, and every maner boone
That he God asked, it were sped ful soone.
It were ful hard by ordre for to sayne
How many wondres Jesus for hem wroughte;
But atte last, to tellen schort and playne,
The sergeantz of the toun of Rome hem soughte,
And hem byforn Almache the prefect broughte,
Which hem apposed, and knew alle here entente,
And to the ymage of Jubiter hem sente;
And saide, 'Who so wil not sacrifise,
Swope of his heved, this my sentence heere.'
Anoon these martires, that I you devyse,
Oon Maximus, that was an officere
Of the prefectes, and his corniculere,[2]
Hem hent, and whan he forth the seyntes ladde,
Him self he wept for pite that he hadde.
Whan Maximus had herd the seintes lore,
He gat him of his tormentoures leve,
And bad hem to his hous withouten more;
And with her preching, er that it were eve,
Thay gonne fro the tormentoures to reve,
And fro Maxime, and fro his folk echoone,
The false faith, to trowe in God alloone.
Cecilie cam, whan it was waxen night,
With prestis, that hem cristenid alle in feere;
And afterward, whan day was waxen light,

[1] Knight means properly servant. Thus in Wickliffe's translation of the Bible, 'Thy servant David' is rendered 'Thy knight David.'
[2] Harl. MS., *counceilere*, called *prevost* in the original.

Cecilie hem sayde with a ful stedefast chere;
'Now, Cristes owne knyghtes leef and deere,
Cast al away the werkes of derknes,
And armith you in armur of brightnes.[1]
'Ye han forsothe y-doon a greet batayle;
Youre cours is doon, youre faith han ye conserved;[2]
Goth to the coroun of lyf that may not fayle;
The rightful jugge, which that ye han served,
Schal geve it yow, as ye han it deserved.'
And whan this thing was sayd, as I devyse,
Men ladde hem forth to doon the sacrifise.
But whan tlfey were to the place y-brought,
To telle schortly the conclusioun,
They nolde encense ne sacrifice right nought,[3]
But on her knees they setten hem adoun,
With humble hert and sad devocioun,
And leften bothe her heedes in that place;
Here soules wenten to the king of grace.
This Maximus, that say this thing betyde,
With pitous teeres tolde it anoon right,
That he here soules saugh to heven glyde
With aungels, ful of clernes and of light;
And with his word converted many a wight.
For which Almachius dede him so bete
With whippes of leed,[4] til he his lif gan lete.
Cecilie him took, and buried him anoon
By Tiburce and Valirian softely,
Withinne hire berieng place, under the stoon.

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[1] Rom. xiii. [2] 2 Tim. iv.

[3] This was the criterion. The Christians were brought to the image of Jupiter, or of the Emperor, and commanded to join in the sacrifice, by eating part of it, or to throw a few grains of incense into the censer, in token of worship; if they refused, they were put to death.—See Pliny's celebrated letter to Trajan. Those who complied were termed *sacrificati*, and *thurificati* by the canons, and were excluded from communion for seven or ten years, or even till their death, according to the circumstances of their lapse.—See Bingham's *Antiquities*, b. xvi. 4, 5.

[4] With a cat-o'-nine-tails knotted with lead. The French is, 'il le feit tant *battre de plombees* qu'il mit hors l'esperit.'

And after this Almachius hastily
Bad his ministres fecchen openly
Cecilie, so that sche might in his presence
Doon sacrifice, and Jubiter encense.
But they, converted at hir wise lore,
Wepten ful sore, and gaven ful credence
Unto hir word, and cryden more and more;
'Crist, Goddes sone, withouten difference,
Is verray God, this is al oure sentence,
That hath so good a servaunt him to serve;
Thus with oon vois we trowen, though we sterve.'
Almachius, that herd of this doynge,
Bad fecchen Cecilie, that he might hir se;
And alther-first, lo, this was his axinge;
'What maner womman art thou?' quod he.
'I am a gentil-womman born,' quod sche.
'I axe the,' quod he, 'though the it greve,
Of thi religioun and of thi byleve.'
'Ye han bygonne your questioun folily,'
Quod sche, 'that wolden tuo answers conclude
In oo demaunde; ye axen lewedly.'
Almache answerde to that similitude,
'Of whens cometh thin answering so rude?'
'Of whens?' quod sche, whan she was i-freyned,
'Of conscience, and of good faith unfeyned.'
Almachius sayde, 'Takest thou noon heede
Of my power?' and sche answerde him this;
'Youre might,' quod sche, 'ful litel is to drede;
For every mortal mannes power nys
But lyk a bladder ful of wynd I wis;
For with a nedeles poynt, whan it is blowe,
May al the bost of it be layd ful lowe.'
'Ful wrongfully bygonnest thou,' quod he,
'And yet in wrong is thy perseveraunce.
Wostow nought how oure mighty princes fre
Han thus comaunded and maad ordinaunce,
That every cristen wight schal han penaunce,

But if that he his Cristendom withseye,
And goon al quyt, if he wil it reneye?'
'Youre princes erre, as youre nobleye doth,'
Quod tho Cecilie; 'and with a wood sentence
Ye make us gulty, and it is nought soth;
For ye that knowen wel oure innocence,
Forasmoche as we doon ay reverence
To Crist, and for we bere a Cristen name,
Ye putten on us a crim and eek a blame.
'But we that knowen thilke name so
For vertuous, we may it not withseye.'
Almache sayde, 'Cheese oon of these tuo,
Do sacrifice or Cristendom reneye,
That thou mow now eschapen by that weye.'
At which the holy blisful faire mayde
Gan for to laughe, and to the jugge sayde;
'O jugge confus in this nycete,
Wilt thou that I refuse innocence?
To make me a wikked wight,' quod sche.
'Lo, he dissimuleth heer in audience,
He starith and woodith in his advertence.'
To whom Almachius sayde, 'Unsely wrecche,
Ne wostow nought how fer my might may strecche?
'Han nought our mighty princes to me y-given,
Ye bothe power and eek auctorite
To maken folk to deyen or to lyven?
Why spekestow so proudly than to me?'
'I speke not but stedefastly,' quod sche,
'Nought proudly, for I say, as for my syde,
We haten deedly thilke vice of pryde.
'And if thou drede nought a soth to heere,
Than wol I schewe al openly by right,
That thou hast maad a ful greet lesyng heere.
Thou saist, thy princes han i-give the might
Bothe for to sleen and eek to quike a wight,
Thou that ne maist but oonly lif byreve,
Thou hast noon other power ne no leve.

'But thou maist sayn, thi princes han the maked
Minister of deth: for if thou speke of moo,
Thow liest; for thy power is ful naked.'
'Do way thy lewednes,' sayd Almachius tho,
'And sacrifice to oure goddes, er thou go.
I recche naught what wrong that thou me profre,
For I can suffre it as a philosophre.
'But thilke wronges may I not endure,
That thou spekis of oure goddis her,' quod he.
Cecilie answered, 'O nice creature,
Thou saydest no word sins thou spak to me,
That I ne knew therwith thy nicéte,
And that thou were in every maner wise
A lewed officer, a vein justise.
'Ther lakketh no thing to thin outer eyen
That thou art blynde; for thing that we seen alle
That it is stoon, that men may wel aspien,
That ilke stoon a god thou wilt it calle.
I rede the, let thin hond upon it falle,
And tast it wel, and stoon thou schalt it fynde;
Sith that thou seest not with thin eyghen blynde.
'It is a schame that the poeple schal
So scorne the, and laughe at thi folye;
For comunly men woot it wel over al,
That mighty God is in his heven hye;
And these ymages, wel thou mayst espie,
To thene to hem self may nought profyte,
For in effect they ben nought worth a myte.'
Thise wordes and such other sayde sche;
And he wax wroth, and bad men schold hir lede
Hom to hir hous; 'And in hir hous,' quod he,
'Brenne hir right in a bath of flammes rede.'
And as he bad, right so was doon the dede;
For in a bath thay gonne hir faste schetten,
And nyght and day greet fuyr they under betten.
The longe night, and eek a day also,
For al the fuyr, and eek the bathes hete,
Sche sat al cold, and felte of it no woo,

It made hir not oon drope for to swete.
But in that bath hir lif sche moste lete;
For he Almachius, with ful wikke entente,
To sleen hir in the bath his sondes sente.
Thre strokes in the nek he smot hir tho
The tormentour, but for no maner chaunce
He might nought smyte hir faire necke a-tuo.
And for ther was that tyme an ordinaunce
That no man scholde do man such penaunce
The ferthe strok to smyten, softe or sore,
This tormentour ne dorste do no more;
But half deed, with hir nekke corven there
He laft hir lye, and on his way he went.
The cristen folk, which that about hir were,
With scheetes han the blood ful faire y-hent;
Thre dayes lyved sche in this torment,
And never cessed hem the faith to teche,
That sche had fostred[1] hem, sche gan to preche.
And hem sche gaf hir moebles and hir thing,
And to the pope Urban bytook hem tho,
And sayd, 'I axe this of heven kyng,
To have respit thre dayes and no mo,
To recomende to yow, er that I go,
These soules lo, and that I mighte do wirche
Heer of myn hous perpetuelly a chirche.'
Seynt Urban, with his dekenes prively
The body fette, and buried it by nighte
Among his other seyntes honestely.
Hir hous the chirch of seynt Cecily yit highte;[2]
Seynt Urban halwed it, as he wel mighte;
In which into this day in noble wyse
Men doon to Crist and to his seint servise.

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[1] Harl MS., *suffred*. The meaning of the text seems to be, 'she preached to them that faith in which she had fostered them.'

[2] It is now a church in Rome, and gives a title to a cardinal.

THE PROLOGE OF THE CHANOUNES YEMAN.[1]

WHAN ended was the lif of seynt Cecile,
Er we fully had riden fyve myle,
At Boughtoun under Blee us gan atake
A man, that clothed was in clothes blake,[2]
And under that he had a whit surplice,
His hakeney, that was a pomely grice,
So swete, that it wonder was to se,
It semed he hadde priked myles thre.
The hors eek that his Yeman rood upon,
So swette, that unnethes might he goon.

---

[1] This prologue and tale come before *The Maunciples* in Tyrwhitt's edition; and that arrangement certainly agrees better with the fact mentioned in the opening, that the pilgrims were now at Boughton-under-Blee, five miles on the London side of Canterbury. But, on the other hand, it makes the incident of their being overtaken by the Chanoun and his Yeman, who are represented as having seen them leave their hostelry in the morning, still more improbable. To reconcile these difficulties Tyrwhitt proposes two hypotheses. First, that *The Nonne's Tale* was intended by Chaucer to be the first on the *return* from Canterbury. Thus, the Chanoun might well have overtaken them at Boughton, after having galloped in pursuit of them from Canterbury. But this is inconsistent with the words of the Yeman, who, in his prologue, speaks as if riding *towards* Canterbury. Secondly, Tyrwhitt supposes that the pilgrims lay upon the road, and that *The Nonne's Tale* was the first of the second day's journey; 'but,' he adds, 'if they lay only five miles from Boughton, I do not see how they could spend the whole second day till evening' (as it appears from the prologue to *The Persones Tale* they did) 'in travelling from thence to Canterbury.' These difficulties are fatal to either hypothesis, and so utterly inconsistent with the time and place indicated, that it must be concluded either that Chaucer, when he adopted the fiction of the pilgrimage to Canterbury as a convenient vehicle for his stories, neglected the minor proprieties of his plan as unimportant; or that these anomalies are to be attributed to the unfinished state of the poem, and that they would have been corrected had he lived to complete his work.

[2] The idea of making the cathedral clergy live together in common under a certain rule, which was a compromise between the strictness of the monastic and the freedom of the secular life, appears to have originated with St. Augustin, (*Aug. Serm.* 49, *de Diversis,*) and was generally adopted throughout the Western Church. The canons, being all clergymen, wore a surplice, that is, a short linen garment without sleeves, and over this a black cloak with a hood, as here indicated.

Aboute the peytrel stood the foom ful hye,
He was of foom as flekked as a pye.[1]
A male tweyfold on his croper lay,
It semed that he caried litel array,
Al light for somer rood this worthy man.
And in myn herte wondren I bigan
What that he was, til that I understood,
How that his cloke was sowed unto his hood;[2]
For which whan I long had avysed me,
I demed him som chanoun for to be.
His hat heng at his bak doun by a laas,
For he had riden more than trot or paas,
He had i-pryked lik as he were wood.
A cloote-leef he had under his hood
For swoot, and for to kepe his heed from hete.
But it was joye for to se him swete;
His forhed dropped as a stillatorie
Were ful of plantayn and of peritorie.[4]
And whanne that he was com, he gan to crie,
'God save,' quod he, 'this joly compaignye!
Fast have I priked,' quod he, 'for your sake,
Bycause that I wolde you atake,
To ryden in this mery companye.'
His Yeman eek was ful of curtesye,
And seid, 'Sires, now in the morwe tyde
Out of your ostelry I saugh you ryde,[5]
And warned heer my lord and soverayn,
Which that to ryden with yow is ful fayn,
For his desport; he loveth daliaunce.'
'Frend, for thy warnyng God geve the good chaunce,
Sayde oure Host, 'for certes it wolde seme
Thy lord were wys, and so I may wel deme;

[1] He was so spotted with foam that he looked like a magpie.
[2] See *ante*, p. 24, note 2.
[3] He had placed a leaf of the burdock between his hood and his head to preserve his hood from sweat, and because of the heat, to keep his head cool.
[4] These were herbs which were distilled for medical purposes.
[5] See *ante*, p. 24, note 1.

He is ful jocound also dar I leye;
Can he ought[1] telle a mery tale or tweye,
With which he glade may this companye?'
'Who, sire? my lord? Ye, ye, withoute lye,
He can of merthe and eek of jolite
Not but y-nough; also, sir, trusteth me,
And ye him knewe as wel as do I,[2]
Ye wolde wonder how wel and thriftily
He couthe werke, and that in sondry wise.
He hath take on him many sondry emprise,
Which were ful hard for eny that is heere
To bringe aboute, but thay of him it leere.
As homely as he ryt amonges yow,
If ye him knewe, it wolde be your prow;
Ye nolde nought for-gon his acqueyntaunce
For moche good, I dar lay in balaunce
Al that I have in my possessioun.
He is a man of heigh discressioun,
I warne yow wel, he is a passyng man.'
'Wel,' quod our Oost, 'I pray the, tel me than,
Is he a clerk, or noon? tell what he is.'
'Nay, he is gretter than a clerk I wis,'
Sayde this Yeman, 'and in wordes fewe,
Ost, of his craft somwhat I wil you schewe.
I say, my lord can such a subtilite,
(But al his craft ye may nought wite of me,
And somwhat helpe I yit to his worchynge),
That al this ground on which we ben ridynge
Til that we comen to Caunterbury toun,
He couthe al clene turnen up so doun,
And pave it al of silver and of gold.'
And whan this Yeman hadde thus i-told

[1] *Ought* seems here to have a sort of interrogative power, as if he had said, 'Can your master *by any chance* tell a tale or two?' See vol. ii. p. 40, note 1.

[2] This line appears to be an example of the emphatic word *I* at the end of a line, occupying the place of an iambus; unless it be preferred to sound the final *e* of *knewe*, which would be contrary to the rule, very generally observed, of eliding a final *e* before a vowel, and would besides make a very rugged line.

Unto oure Oost, he seyde, '*Benedicite!*
This thing is wonder merveylous to me,
Syn that this lord is of so heigh prudence,
Bycause of which men schuld him reverence,
That of his worschip rekketh he so lite;
His over slop it is not worth a myte
As in effect to him, so mot I go;
It is al bawdy and to-tore also.
Why is thi lord so slottisch, I the preye,
And is of power better clothis to beye,
If that his dede accorde with thy speche?
Telle me that, and that I the biseche.'
'Why?' quod this Yeman, 'wherto axe ye me?
God help me so, for he schal never the,
(But I, wol nought avowe what I say,
And therfor kep it secre I yow pray)
He is to wys in faith, as I bileve.
Thing that is over-don, it wil nought preve
Aright, as clerkes sein,[1] it is a vice;
Wherfore in that I holde him lewed and nyce.
For whan a man hath over-greet a witte,
Ful ofte him happeth to mysusen itte;
So doth my lord, and that me greveth sore.
God it amende, I can say now nomore.'
'Therof no fors, good Yeman,' quod oure Ost,
'Syn of the connyng of thi lord thou wost,
Tel how he doth, I pray the hertily,
Sin that he is so crafty and so sly.
Wher dwellen ye, if it to telle be?'[2]
'In the subarbes of a toun,' quod he,
'Lurking in hirnes and in lanes blynde,
Wher as these robbours and these theves by kynde
Holden here prive ferful residence,[3]
As thay that dor nought schewen her presence;

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[1] An allusion to the proverb, *ne quid nimis.*
[2] If it be to be told.
[3] This line has all the character of Shakespeare.

So faren we, if I schal say the sothe.'
'Now,' quod oure Ost, 'yit let me talke to the;
Why artow so discoloured on thy face?'
'Peter!' quod he, 'God give it harde grace,
I am so used the fuyr to blowe,
That it hath chaunged my colour I trowe;
I am not wont in no mirour to prie,
But swynke sore, and lerne to multiplie.
We blondren ever, and pouren in the fuyr,
And for al that we faile of oure desir,
For ever we lacken oure conclusioun.
To moche folk we ben illusioun,[1]
And borwe gold, be it a pound or tuo,
Or ten or twelve, or many sommes mo,
And make hem wenen atte leste weye,
That of a pound we conne make tweye.
Yit is it fals; and ay we han good hope.
It for to doon, and after it we grope.
But that science is so fer us biforn,
We mowen nought, although we had it sworn,
It overtake, it slyt away so fast;
It wol us make beggers atte last.'
Whil this Yeman was thus in his talkyng,
This Chanoun drough him ner and herd al thing
Which that this Yiman spak, for suspeccioun
Of mennes speche ever hadde this Chanoun;
For Catoun[1] saith, that he that gulty is,
Demeth al thing be spoke of him, I wis;
By cause[2] of that he gan so neigh to drawe
His Yeman, that he herde al his sawe;
And thus he sayd unto his Yeman tho;
'Hold now thi pees, and spek no wordes mo;

[1] This precept of Cato is in lib. i. dist. 17:—
'Ne cures si quis tacito sermone loquatur;
Conscius ipse sibi de se putat omnia dici.'—T.

[2] Here we find that the original form of the conjunction *because* was the substantive *cause*, with the preposition *by*.

For if thou do, thou schalt it deere abye:
Thow sclaundrest me here in this companye,
And eek discoverest that thou schuldest hide.'
'Ye,' quod oure Ost, 'tel on, what so bytyde;
Of alle this thretyng recche the nought a myte.'
'In faith,' quod he, 'no more do I but lite.'
And whan this Chanoun seih it wold not be,
But his Yeman wold telle his privete,
He fledde away for verray sorwe and schame.
'A!' quod the Yeman, 'her schal arise game;
Al that I can anoon now wol I telle,
Sin he is goon; the foule feend him quelle!
For never herafter wol I with him meete
For peny ne for pound, I wol byheete.
He that me broughte first unto that game,
Er that he deye, sorwe have he and schame!
For it is ernest[1] to me, by my faith;
That fele I wel, what so eny man saith;
And yet for al my smert, and al my greef,
For al my sorwe, and labour, and mescheef,
I couthe never leve it in no wise.
Now wolde God my wyt mighte suffise
To tellen al that longeth to that art;
But natheles, yet wil I telle yow part;
Sin that my lord is goon, I wol nought spare,
Such thing as that I knowe, I wol declare.'[2]
'With this Chanoun I duelled have seven yer,
And of his science am I never the ner;
Al that I hadde, I have lost therby,
And God wot, so hath many mo than I.
Ther I was wont to be right freisch and gay
Of clothing, and of other good array,

[1] The Yeman first calls the endeavour to transmute metals a *game*, and then adds, it is *ernest*, that is, it has been a serious thing, to me.

[2] In Tyrwhitt's edition the prologue ends here, and the tale is made to begin with the words, 'With this chanoun I duelled have seven yer.'

Now may I were an hose[1] upon myn heed;
And where my colour was bothe freissch and reed,
Now it is wan, and of a leden hewe,
(Who so it useth, sore schal he rewe);
And of my swynk yet blended is myn ye;
Lo! such avauntage it is to multiplie![2]
That slydynge science had me made so bare,
That I have no good, wher that ever I fare;
And yit I am endetted so therby
Of gold, that I have borwed trewely,
That whil I lyve schal I quite never;
Let every man be war by me for ever.
What maner man that casteth him therto,
If he continue, I holde his thrift i-do;
So help me God, therby schal he not wynne,
But empte his purs, and make his wittes thynne.
And whan he, thurgh his madnes and folye,
Hath lost his owne good in jeupardie,[3]
Than he exciteth other men therto,
To lesse her good, as he himself hath do.
For unto schrewes joy it is and ese
To have here felawes in peyne and desese.
Thus was I oones lerned of a clerk;
Of that no charge; I wol speke of oure werk.
Whan we ben ther as we schul exercise
Oure elvyssh craft, we seme wonder wyse,

---

[1] He was obliged to wear a stocking on his head, because he could not afford a hood.

[2] This line consists of eleven syllables, and must be read:—

'Lŏ sŭch | ăvăuntāge | ĭt ĭs | tŏ mūl | tĭplĭē.'

Avauntage, being a French word, is accented on the last syllable.

[3] A *jeu parti* is properly a game in which the chances are exactly even. See Froissart, vol. i. c. 234. 'Ils n'estoient pas à *jeu parti* contre les François.' From hence it signifies anything uncertain or hazardous. In the old French poetry the discussion of a problem, where much might be said on both sides was called a *jeu parti*. See *Poesies du Roy de Navarre*, Chanson xlviii., and *Glossary*, in v. See also *Du Cange*, in v. *jocus partitus*.—T. For some particulars concerning the *Jeux-partis*, the reader may be also referred to the Introduction to *The Court of Love* in vol. iv. of this edition.

Oure termes ben so clergeal and queynte.[1]
I blowe the fuyr til that myn herte feynte.
What schulde I telle ech proporcioun
Of thinges which that we werke up and doun,
As on fyve or six ounces, may wel be,
Of silver, or som other quantite?
And besy me to telle yow the names,
As orpiment, brent bones, yren squames,
That into poudre grounden ben ful smal?
And in an erthen pot how put is al,
And salt y-put in, and also paupere,
Biforn these poudres that I speke of heere,
And wel i-covered with a lamp of glas?
And of moche other thing what that ther was?
And of the pot and glas enlutyng,[2]
That of the aier mighte passe no thing?
And of the esy fuyr, and smert also,
Which that was maad? and of the care and wo,
That we hadde in oure matiers sublymynge,
And in amalgamynge, and calcenynge
Of quyksilver, y-clept mercury crude?
For alle oure sleightes we can nought conclude.
Oure orpiment, and sublyment mercurie,
Oure grounde litarge eek in the porfurye,
Of ech of these of ounces a certayn
Nat helpeth us, oure labour is in vayn.
Ne eek oure spirites ascencioun,
Ne eek oure matiers that lyn al fix adoun,
Mowe in oure werkyng us no thing avayle;
For lost is al oure labour and travayle,
And al the cost on twenty devel way
Is lost also, which we upon it lay.

---

[1] Our technical words have so great a show of clerkship or learning.

[2] *Enlutyng* means covering the joining of the pot and glass lamp with clay (*lutum*), so as to exclude the air. This being a process much used in the pretended philosophy *Hermes Trismegistus*, is still called sealing *hermetically*.

Ther is also ful many another thing,
That is to oure craft appertenyng,
Though I by ordre hem here reherse ne can,
Bycause that I am a lewed man,
Yet wil I telle hem, as they come to mynde,
Though I ne conne nought sette hem in her kynde;
As bol armoniak, verdegres, boras;
And sondry vessels maad of erthe and glas,
Oure urinals and oure descensories,
Viols, croslets, and sublimatories,
Concurbites, and alembikes eeke,
And othere suche, deere y-nough a leeke,[1]
Nat needith it to rehersen hem alle;
Watres rubifying,[2] and boles galle,
Arsnek, sal armoniak, and brimstoon.
And herbes couthe I telle eek many oon,
As egrimoigne, valirian, and lunarie,
And other suche, if that me list to tarie;
Oure lampes brennyng bothe night and day,
To bringe aboute oure craft if that we may;
Oure fourneys[3] eek of calcinacioun,
And of watres albificacioun,
Unslekked lym, salt, and glayre of an ey,
Poudres dyvers, aissches, dong, pisse, and cley,
Cered poketts, sal petre, vitriole;
And dyvers fuyres maad of woode and cole;
Salt tartre, alcaly, and salt preparat,
And combust matieres, and coagulat;
Cley maad with hors or mannes her, and oyle
Of tartre, alym, glas, berm, wort, and argoyle,
Resalgar, and oure matiers enbibing;
And eek of oure matiers encorporing,

---

[1] Dear enough if purchased for a leek. See vol. ii. p. 154, note 2.

[2] *Rubifying.* Harl. MS. reads *rubisyng.*—W.

[3] *Fourneys.* The Harl. MS. appears to read *fourmes;* but Lansd. MS. reads *forneys,* which is adopted by Tyrwhitt, and seems to be correct.—W.

And of oure silver citrinacioun,
Oure cementynge and fermentacioun,
Oure yngottes, testes, and many thinges mo.
I wol you telle as was me taught also
The foure spiritz, and the bodies seven
By ordre, as ofte herd I my lord neven.
The firste spirit quyksilver called is;
The secound orpiment; the thridde I wis
Sal armoniac, and the ferthe bremstoon.
The bodies seven, eek, lo hem heer anoon.
Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe;
Mars yren, Mercurie quyksilver we clepe;
Saturnus leed, and Jubitur is tyn,
And Venus coper, by my fader kyn.
'This cursed craft who so wol exercise,
He schal no good han that may him suffise;
For al the good he spendeth theraboute
He lese schal, therof have I no doute.
Who so that list outen his folye,
Let him come forth and lerne multiplie;[1]
And every man that hath ought in his cofre,
Let him appiere, and wexe a philosofre,
Ascauns that craft is so light to lere.
Nay, nay, God wot, al be he monk or frere,
Prest or chanoun, or eny other wight
Though he sit at his book bothe day and night
In lernyng of this elvysch nice lore,
Al is in vayn, and parde moche more
Is to lerne a lewed man this subtilte;
Fy, spek not therof, for it wil not be.
Al couthe he letterure, or couthe he noon,
As in effect, he schal fynd it al oon;
For bothe two by my salvacioun
Concluden in multiplicacioun

[1] Whosoever wants an opportunity of exposing his folly, let him come and learn the science of the transmutation of metals.

I-liche wel, whan thay han al y-do;
This is to sayn, thay fayle bothe tuo.
Yet forgat I to make rehersayle
Of watres corosif, and of lymayle,
And of bodyes mollificacioun,
And also of here enduracioun,
Oyles ablucioun, and metal fusible,
To tellen al, wold passen eny bible
That o wher is; wherfore, as for the best,
Of alle these names now wil I me rest;
For, as I trowe, I have yow told y-nowe
To reyse a feend, al loke he never so rowe,[1]
A, nay, let be; the philosophre stoon,[2]
Elixir clept, we sechen fast echoon,
For had we him, than were we syker y-nough;
But unto God of heven I make avow,
For al oure craft, whan we han al y-do,
And al oure sleight, he wol not come us to.
He hath i-made us spende moche good,
For sorwe of which almost we wexen wood,
But that good hope crepeth in oure herte,
Supposing ever, though we sore smerte,
To ben relieved by him after-ward.
Such supposing and hope is scharp and hard.
I warne you wel it is to seken ever.
That future temps hath made men dissevere,
In trust therof, from al that ever they hadde.
Yet of that art thay conne nought wexe sadde,

[1] The Yeman says, 'All these hard names which I have told you have enough of conjuring power in them to be sufficient to raise a devil, however rough he may look.'

[2] These occult sciences were imported, together with many true principles of natural philosophy, from Arabia. Jeber, an Arab philosopher, who flourished in the seventh century, wrote a book entitled *Lapis Philosophorum*, of which Boerhaave declares that, except the fancies about the philosopher's stone, the exactness of the experiments described has been proved by modern discoveries.—*Hist. Chemistry*, pp. 14, 15. Lond. 1727. To the prevalent belief in the virtues of the philosopher's stone Falstaff alludes in *2 Henry IV.*, Act iii., sc. 2.

For unto hem it is a bitter swete;
So semeth it; for nad thay but a scheete
Which thay mighte wrappe hem in a-night,
And a bak[1] to walke inne by day-light,
They wolde hem selle, and spenden on this craft;
Thay can nought stinte, til no thing be laft.
And evermore, wher that ever they goon,
Men may hem knowe by smel of bremstoon;
For al the world thay stynken as a goot;
Her savour is so rammyssch and so hoot
That though a man fro hem a myle be,
The savour wol infecte him, trusteth me.
Lo, thus by smellyng and by thred-bare array,
If that men list, this folk they knowe may.
And if a man wol aske hem prively,
Why thay ben clothed so unthriftily,
Right anoon thay wol rounen in his eere,
And say, if that thay espied were,
Men wold hem slee, bycause of here science;
Lo, thus this folk bytrayen innocence.
Passe over this, I go my tale unto.
Er than the pot be on the fuyr y-do
Of metals with a certeyn quantite,
My lord hem tempreth, and no man but he;
(Now he is goon, I dar say boldely)
For as men sayn, he can doon craftily;
Algate I wot wel he hath such a name,
And yet ful ofte he renneth in blame;
'And wite ye how? ful ofte it happeth so,
The pot to breketh, and farwel, al is goo.

---

[1] For *bak* Tyrwhitt reads *bratt*, a word still used in Scotland, and meaning *rag*. The reading in the text, however, may be taken for a figure of speech enumerated by Barrow among the forms of wit, by the name of 'a lusty hyperbole,' and meaning, 'Though they have only a sheet by night, and their backs to walk in by daylight, *i. e.*, though they must walk naked, yet they would sell their sheet and their backs,' *i. e.*, themselves.

These metals been of so gret violence,
Oure walles may not make hem resistence,
But if thay were wrought of lym and stoon;
Thay percen so, that thurgh the wal thay goon;
And some of hem synken into the grounde,
(Thus have we lost by tymes many a pounde),
And some are skatered al the floor aboute;
Some lepe into the roof, withouten doute.
Though that the feend nought in oure sight him schewe,
I trowe that he with us be,[1] that schrewe;
In helle, wher that he is lord and sire,
Nis ther no more woo, ne anger, ne ire.
Whan that oure pot is broke, as I have sayd,
Every man chyt, and halt him evel apayde.
Som sayd it was long[2] on the fuyr-makyng;
Some sayde nay, it was on the blowyng;
(Than was I ferd, for that was myn office).
'Straw!' quod the thridde, 'ye been lewed and nyce,
It was nought tempred as it oughte be.'
'Nay,' quod the ferthe, 'stynt and herkne me;
Bycause oure fuyr was nought y-maad of beech,
That is the cause, and other noon, so theech.'
I can not telle wheron it was long,
But wel I woot gret stryf is us among.
'What?' quod my lord, 'ther is no more to doone,
Of these periles I wol be war eftsoone.
I am right siker, that the pot was crased.
Be as be may, be ye no thing amased.
As usage is, let swoope the floor as swithe;
Pluk up your hertes and beth glad and blithe.'

---

[1] There cannot be in hell more sorrow and fury than there is sometimes among transmuters of metals when their experiments fail; therefore, the yeman concludes, the devil must be present with them.

[2] This mode of expression is still used by the vulgar. 'It was all *along* of your awkwardness that I spilled the milk,' is a common phrase. It occurs again a few lines lower down, 'I cannot telle whereon it was long,' *i. e.*, I cannot tell what was the cause of it, or how it happened.

The mullok on an heep i-swoped was,
And on the floor y-cast a canevas,
And al this mulloc in a syve i-throwe,
And sifted, and y-plukked many a throwe.
'Parde,' quod oon, 'somwhat of oure metal
Yet is ther heer, though that we have nought al.
And though this thing myshapped hath as now,
Another tyme it may be wel y-now.
Us moste putte oure good in adventure.
A marchaunt, parde, may not ay endure,
Trusteth me wel, in his prosperite;
Som tyme his goôd is drowned in the see,
And som tyme cometh it sauf unto the londe.'
'Pees!' quod my lord, 'the nexte tyme I wol fonde[1]
To bringe oure craft al in another plyte,
And but I do, sires, let me have the wyte;
Ther was defaute in som what, wel I woot.'
Another sayde, the fuyr was over hoot.
But be it hoot or cold, I dar say this,
That we concluden evermor amys;
We faile of that which that we wolden have,
And in oure madnesse evermore we rave.
And whan we ben togideres everichon,
Everiche man semeth a Salamon.
But al thing which that schineth as the gold,
Is nought gold,[2] as that I have herd told;
Ne every appel that is fair at ye,
Ne is not good, what so men clappe or crye.
Right so, lo, fareth it amonges us.
He that semeth the wisest, by Jesus!
Is most fool, whan it cometh to the preef;
And he that semeth trewest is a theef.

---

[1] I will endeavour to bring our craft, &c.

[2] This is from the *Parabolæ* of Alanus de Insulis, a Latin poet, who died in 1294:—

'Non teneas aurum totum quod splendet ut aurum,
Nec pulchrum pomum quodlibet esse bonum.'—T.

That schul ye knowe, er that I fro yow wende,
By that I of my tale have maad an ende.
'Ther is a chanoun of religioun
Amonges us, wold infecte al a toun,
Though it as gret were as was Ninive,
Rome, Alisaundre, Troye, or other thre.
His sleight and his infinite falsnesse
Ther couthe no man writen, as I gesse,
Though that he mighte lyven a thousand yeer;
Of al this world of falsheed nys his peer,
For in his termes he wol him so wynde,
And speke his wordes in so sleygh a kynde,
Whan he comune schal with eny wight,
That he wil make him dote anoon right,
But it a feend be, as him selven is.
Ful many a man hath he bygiled er this,
And wol, if that he lyve may a while;
And yet men ryde and goon ful many a myle
Him for to seeke, and have his aqueintaunce,
Nought knowyng of his false governaunce.
And if yow list to geve me audience,
I wol it telle here in youre presence.
But, worschipful chanouns religious,
Ne demeth not that I sclaundre youre hous,
Although my tale of a chanoun be.
Of every ordre som schrewe is, pardee;
And God forbede that al a companye
Schulde rewe a singuler mannes folye.
To sclaunder yow is no thing myn entent,
But to correcten that is mys i-ment.[1]
This tale was not oonly told for yow,
But eek for other moo; ye woot wel how
That among Cristes apostles twelve
Ther was no traytour but Judas him selve;

[1] Speght reads—

'But to correct that amisse is ment.'

The meaning of the text is, not to slander you, but to correct what is i-ment, *i.e.* intended, amiss, or done with an evil meaning or intention.

Than why schulde the remenaunt have a blame,
That gulteles were? by yow I say the same.
Save oonly this, if ye wol herkene me,
If any Judas in youre covent be,
Remewe him by tyme, I yow rede,
If schame or los may causen eny drede.
And beth no thing displesed, I you pray,
But in this caas herkeneth what I say.'

THE CHANOUNES YEMANNES TALE.

[In this tale and its prologue, Chaucer satirizes the prevailing belief in alchemy, which had been introduced to the study of the Western nations from Arabia, as its name implies, in the beginning of the eighth century. From the Arabs Europe derived the rudiments of physical science, but debased by the belief in magical influences which entered into all the speculations of Eastern philosophy. Their astronomy took the form of judicial astrology, their chemistry that of alchemy, and their physics and optics were deformed with strange notions of mysterious and supernatural agencies. The supposition that, by means of the analytical experiments, which, as Boerhaave allows, the Arabs performed with great exactness and success, they might discover the component parts of the precious metals, and, by combining them, produce the metals themselves, was, no doubt, the origin of the hermetic philosophy. On this principle they would have concluded that, because a diamond is one form of carbon, diamonds might be manufactured out of charcoal. To these golden visions, however, we owe the labours of Roger Bacon, who, by his patient analysis of the powers of nature, gave to his still more illustrious namesake the clue by which he was enabled to indicate to his successors the passage into her most secret labyrinths. The belief that comparatively worthless substances might be chemically combined so as to produce gold and silver was very general in England at this period;

Edward the Third was persuaded by Raymond Lully even to look to it as a source of national wealth; and it was held as an article of popular faith that the beautiful gold coin, called the Rose Noble, was manufactured by means of this mysterious process. See Ashmol. *Theatrum Chemicum*, Lond. 1652, p. 443. The impostures which were practised on the public credulity led to the statute of 5 Henry IV., c. 4, noticed by Tyrwhitt, which made it felony 'to multiply gold or silver, or to use the art of multiplication.' The delusion, however, still continued to flourish in some quarters; and, in the reign of Edward the Fourth, we find George Ripley producing a poem on the subject, entitled *The Compound of Alchemie*, which he dedicated to the King. See Warton, § 25. This poetical alchemist was a Canon Regular of Bridlington, in Yorkshire, a circumstance which curiously confirms Chaucer's charge against that order of clergy; though why the canons should have been peculiarly addicted to this vain pursuit is not easily determined.

The knowledge of the terms of art displayed in *The Chanounes Yemannes Tale*, and the bitterness of the satire, would lead to the supposition that Chaucer, as well as his royal patron, had been at one time duped by some professor of the science of alchemy. All the artillery of his learning, good sense, brilliant wit, and broad humour is brought to bear upon this mischievous delusion and its abettors. The story is probably founded on an actual incident which had come to the poet's knowledge, if, indeed, it had not some direct influence upon his own fortunes in the latter part of his life. Nor is it very unlikely, as Tyrwhitt hints, that the vigour with which he exposes the frauds of the alchemists may have effectually contributed to the introduction of the statute against 'multiplying.']

IN Londoun was a prest, an annueler,[1]
That therin dwelled hadde many a yer,

[1] They were called *annuelers*, not from their receiving a yearly stipend, as the *Glossary* explains it, but from their being employed solely

Which was so plesaunt and so servisable
Unto the wyf, wher as he was at table,[1]
That sche wolde suffre him no thing for to pay
For bord ne clothing, went he never so gay;
And spending silver had he right y-nough;
Therof no force; I wol procede as now,
And telle forth my tale of the chanoun,
That brought this prest to confusioun.
This false chanoun cam upon a day
Unto the prestes chambre wher he lay,
Biseching him to lene him a certyn
Of gold, and he wold quyt it him ageyn.
'Lene me a mark,' quod he, 'but dayes thre,
And at my day I wil it quyte the.
And if so be, that thou fynde me fals,
Another day hong me up by the hals.'
This prest him took a mark, and that as swithe,
And this chanoun him thankid ofte sithe,
And took his leve, and wente forth his wey;
And atte thridde day brought his money,
And to the prest he took his gold agayn,
Wherof this prest was wonder glad and fayn.
'Certes,' quod he, 'no thing annoyeth me
To lene a man a noble, or two, or thre,
Or what thing were in my possessioun,
Whan he so trewe is of condicioun,

---

in singing *annuals*, or *anniversary* masses for the dead, without any cure of souls.—See the stat. 36 Edw. III., c. viii., where the *chapelleins parochiels* are distinguished from others *chantanz annales, et a cure des almes nient entendantz*. They were both to receive yearly stipends, but the former were allowed to take six marks, and the latter only five. Compare stat. 2 Henry V., c. ii., where the stipend of the *chapellein parochiel* is raised to eight marks, and that of the *chapellein annueler* (he is so named in the statute) to seven. The *chapelleins annuelers* were also called *chantry priests*, and the chapels, of which numbers still exist in our cathedrals and parish churches, were called *chantries*, because mass was there sung (chanté.) Of these *chantry chapels*, Henry the Seventh's, in Westminster Abbey, and Bishop Alcock's, in Ely, lately restored by Jesus Coll., Camb., are well-known examples.

[1] *At table* means at board.

That in no wise he breke wol his day;
To such a man I can never say nay.'
'What?' quod this chanoun, 'schold I be untrewe?
Nay, that were thing i-fallen of the newe.
Trouthe is a thing that I wol ever kepe,
Unto that day in which that I schal crepe
Into my grave, and elles God forbede!
Bilieveth that as siker as your crede.
God thank I, and in good tyme be it sayd,
That ther was never man yet evel apayd
For gold ne silver that he to me lent,
Ne never falshed in myn hert I ment.
And, sire,' quod he, 'now of my privete,
Syn ye so goodlich have be unto me,
And kythed to me so gret gentilesse,
Som what, to quyte with youre kyndenesse,
I wil yow schewe, and if yow lust to lere
I wil yow teche pleynly the manere,
How I kan werken in philosophie.
Takith good heed, ye schul seen wel at ye,
That I wol doon a maystry er I go.'
'Ye?' quod the prest, 'ye, sire, and wol ye so?
Mary! therof I pray you hertily.'
'At youre comaundment, sire, trewely,'
Quod the chanoun, 'and elles God forbede!'
Lo, how this theef couthe his servise beede.
Ful soth it is that such profred servise
Stynketh, as witnessen these olde wise;
And that ful soone I wol it verefye
In this chanoun, roote of al treccherie,
That evermor delit hath and gladnesse
(Such feendly thoughtes in his hert empresse)
How Cristes poeple he may to meschief bringe:
God kepe us from his fals dissimilynge!
What wiste this prest with whom that he delte?
Ne of his harm comyng he no thing felte.
O seely prest, o sely innocent,
With coveytise anoon thou schalt be blent;

O graceles, ful blynd is thy conceyt,
No thing art thou war of the deceyt,
Which that this fox i-schapen hath to the;
His wily wrenches I wis thou maist not fle.
Wherfor to go to the conclusioun,
That referreth to thy confusion,
Unhappy man, anoon I wil me hie
To tellen thin unwitte and thy folye,
And eek the falsnesse of that other wrecche,
Als ferforth as my connyng wol strecche.
This chanoun was my lord, ye wolde weene;
Sire ost, in faith, and by the heven queene,
It was another chanoun, and not he,
That can an hundred fold more subtilte.
He hath bitrayed folkes many tyme;
Of his falsnes it dullith me to ryme.
Ever whan I speke of his falshede,
For schame of him my cheekes wexen reede;
Algates thay bygynne for to glowe,
For reedenes have I noon, right wel I knowe,
In my visage, for fumes diverse
Of metals, which ye han me herd reherse,
Consumed and wasted han my reednesse.
Now tak heed of this chanouns cursednesse.
'Sire,' quod he to the prest, 'let your man goon
For quyksilver, that we it hadde anoon;
And let him bringe ounces tuo or thre;
And whan he cometh, as faste schul ye see
A wonder thing, which ye saugh never er this.'
'Sire,' quod the prest, 'it schal be doon, I wis.'
He bad his servaunt fecche him his thinges,
And he al redy was at his biddynges,
And went him forth, and com anoon agayn
With this quyksilver, schortly for to sayn,
And took these ounces thre to the chanoun;
And he it layde faire and wel adoun,
And bad the servaunt coles for to bringe,
That he anoon might go to his werkynge.

The coles right anoon weren i-fett,
And this chanoun took out a croselett
Of his bosom, and schewed it to the prest.
'This instrument,' quod he, 'which that thou sest,
Tak in thin hond, and put thiself therinne
Of this quyksilver an unce, and her bygynne
In the name of Crist to wax a philosophre.
Ther ben ful fewe, whiche that I wolde profre
To schewe hem thus moche of my science;
For ye schul seen heer by experience,
That this quiksilver I wol mortifye,[1]
Right in youre sight anoon, withouten lye,
And make it as good silver and as fyn
As ther is any in youre purs or myn,
Or elles wher; and make it malleable;
And elles holdeth me fals and unable
Amonges folk for ever to appeere.
I have a pouder heer that cost me deere,
Schal make al good,[2] for it is cause of al
My connyng, which that I you schewe schal.
Voydith youre man, and let him be theroute;
And schet the dore, whils we ben aboute
Oure privetee, that no man us aspie,
Whiles we werken in this philosophie.'
Al, as he bad, fulfilled was in dede.
This ilke servaunt anoon right out yede,
And his maister schitte the dore anoon,
And to here labour speedily thai goon.
This prest, at this cursed chanouns biddyng,
Upon the fuyr anoon sette this thing,
And blew the fuyr, and busied him ful fast;
And this chanoun into the croslet cast

[1] Quicksilver, in the jargon of the so-called philosophy, means living silver, because it is liquid and runs about; and to mortify (as the word implies) is to make it dead, that is, to change it into silver.

[2] The Harl. MS. reads *gold*, which, being inconsistent with the context, is corrected from the Lansd MS.

A pouder, noot I wherof that it was
I-maad, outher of chalk, outher of glas,
Or som what elles, was nought worth a flye
To blynde with this prest;[1] and bad him hye
These coles for to couchen al above
The croislet; for 'in tokenyng I the love,'
Quod this chanoun, 'thin oughne handes tuo
Schal wirche al thing which that schal be do.'
'Graunt mercy,' quod the prest, and was ful glad,
And couchede coles as the chanoun bad.
And whil he besy was, this feendly wrecche,
This false chanoun (the foule feend him fecche!)
Out of his bosom took a bechen cole,
In which ful subtilly was maad an hole,
And therin put was of silver lymayle
An unce, and stopped was withoute fayle
The hole with wex, to kepe the lymail in.
And understondith, that this false gyn
Was not maad ther, but it was maad bifore;
And other thinges I schal telle more
Herafter-ward, which that he with him brought.
Er he com ther, to bigyle him he thought,
And so he dede, er thay wente atwynne;
Til he had torned him,[2] couthe he nought blynne.
It dulleth me, whan that I of him speke;
On his falshede fayn wold I me wreke,
If I wist how, but he is heer and there,
He is so variant, he byt no where.
But taketh heed now, sires, for Goddes love.
He took his cole of which I spak above,
And in his hond he bar it prively,
And whiles the preste couched bysily
The coles, as I tolde yow er this,
This chanoun sayde, 'Freend, ye doon amys;

[1] That is, 'To blind the priest with.'

[2] He could not cease till he had cheated, or, as is still vulgarly said, turned him round his thumb.

This is not couched as it oughte be,
But soone I schal amenden it,' quod he.
'Now let me melle therwith but a while,
For of yow have I pitee, by seint Gile![1]
Ye been right hoot, I se wel how ye swete;
Have heer a cloth and wype away the wete.'
And whiles that this prest him wyped haas,
This chanoun took his cole, I schrewe his faas!
And layd it aboven on the myd-ward
Of the croslet, and blew wel afterward,
Til that the coles gonne faste brenne.
'Now geve us drinke,' quod the chanoun thenne,
'Als swithe al schal be wel, I undertake.
Sitte we doun, and let us mery make.'
And whan that the chanounes bechene cole[2]
Was brent, al the lymail out of the hole
Into the crosselet anoon fel adoun;
And so it moste needes by resoun;
Sins it so even above couched was;
But therof wist the prest no thing, allas!
He demed alle the colis i-liche goode,
For of the sleight he no thing understood.
And whan this alcamister saugh his tyme,
'Rys up, sire prest,' quod he, 'and stonde by me;

---

[1] St. Gile was a native of Athens, and lived in the time of Charlemagne, or some of the early kings of the same name. From fear of the effects upon his own mind of the popularity which followed him in his native country, he travelled into France, and finally retired to a hermitage in a forest near Arles, where his only companion was a pet deer. The lord of the country hunting one day in the neighbourhood pursues this deer, and thus discovers the retreat of the saint, who is accidentally wounded by an arrow intended for his favourite. The holy man's fame thus reaches the ears of King Charles, who builds a monastery, of which St. Gile becomes the first abbot. It is related in the *Legenda Aurea*, is a pretty story, and may possibly be founded on fact.

[2] The Harl. MS. reads—

'*And whan the chanouns beechene cole,*'

which is evidently imperfect; the *that* and the *e* of *chanounes* are supplied by Mr. Wright from Tyrwhitt.

And for I wot wel ingot have ye noon,
Goth, walkith forth, and brynge a chalk-stoon;
For I wol make it of the same schap,
That is an ingold, if I may have hap.
And bringe with you a bolle or a panne
Ful of water, and ye schul wel se thanne
How that oure besynes schal happe and preve.
And yit, for ye schul have no mysbileeve
Ne wrong conceyt of me in youre absence,
I ne wol nought ben out of youre presence,
But go with you, and come with you agayn.'
The chambur dore, schortly for to sayn,
Thay opened and schette, and went here weye,[1]
And forth with hem they caryed the keye,
And comen agayn withouten eny delay.
What schuld I tary al the longe day?
He took the chalk, and schop it in the wise
Of an ingot, as I schal yow devyse;
I say, he took out of his oughne sleeve
A teyne of silver (evel mot he cheeve!)
Which that was but an unce of wight.
And taketh heed now of his cursed slight;
He schop his ingot in lengthe and in brede
Of this teyne, withouten eny drede;[2]
So sleighly, that the prest it nought aspyde;
And in his sleeve agayn he gan it hyde;
And fro the fuyr he took up his mateere,
And into the ingot put it with mery cheere;
And into the watir-vessel he it cast,
Whan that him list, and bad this prest as fast,
'Loke what ther is; put in thin hond and grope;
Thou fynde ther schalt silver, as I hope.'
What devel of helle schold it elles be?
Schavyng of silver, silver is, parde!
He putte in his hond and tok up a teyne
Of silver fyn, and glad in every veyne

[1] Harl. MS. reads *wente forthe here weye.* [2] See vol. ii., p. 35, note 4.

Was this prest, whan he saugh it was so.
'Goddes blessyng, and his modres also,
And alle halwes, have ye, sire chanoun,'
Seyde this prest, 'and I her malisoun![1]
But, and ye vouchesauf to teche me
This nobil craft and this subtilite,
I wil be youre in al that ever I may.'
Quod this chanoun, 'Yet wol I make assay
The secound tyme, that ye mow taken heede,
And ben expert of this, and in your neede
Another day assay[2] in myn absence
This dicipline, and this crafty science,
Let take another unce,' quod he tho,
'Of quyksilver, withouten wordes mo,
And do therwith as ye have doon er this
With that other, which that now silver is.'
The prest him busyeth in al that he can
To doon as this chanoun, this cursed man,
Comaunded him, and faste blew the fuyr,
For to come to theffect of his desyr.
And this chanoun right in the mene while
Al redy was this prest eft to bygile,
And for a countenaunce in his hond bar
An holow stikke (tak keep and be war),
In thende of which an unce and no more
Of silver lymail put was, as bifore
Was in his cole, and stopped with wex wel
For to kepe in his limail every del.
And whil the prest was in his besynesse,
This chanoun with his stikke gan him dresse
To him anoon, and his pouder cast in,
As he dede er, (the devel out of his skyn
Him torne, I pray to God, for his falshede!
For he was ever fals in worde[3] and deede).

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[1] In the excess of his gratitude to the chanoun, the priest exclaims, 'May you have God's blessing, and I his curse.'

[2] The Harl. MS. reads *yourself*, which is evidently a mistake, and is corrected by Mr. Wright from Tyrwhitt

[3] The Harl. MS. reads *oth*; *worde* is from the Lansd. MS.

And with this stikke above[1] the croslet,
That was ordeyned with that false get,
He styred the coles, til relente gan
The wex agayn the fuyr, as every man,
But it a fool be, woot wel it moot nede,
And al that in the hole was out yede,
And into the croslet hastily it fel.
Now, good sires, what wol ye bet than wel?[2]
Whan that this prest thus was begiled agayn,
Supposyng not but trouthe, soth to sayn,
He was so glad, that I can nought expresse
In no maner his myrthe and his gladnesse,
And to the chanoun he profred eft soone
Body and good. 'Ye,' quod the chanoun, 'soone,
Though pore I be, crafty thou schalt me fynde;
I warne the, yet is ther more byhynde.
Is ther any coper her withinne?' quod he.
'Ye, sir,' quod this prest, 'I trowe ther be.
Elles go bye som, and that as swithe.'
'Now good sire, go forth thy way and hy the.'
He went his way, and with this coper cam;
And this chanoun it in his hondes nam,
And of that coper weyed out but an ounce.
Al to simple is my tongue to pronounce,
As minister[4] of my witt, the doublenesse
Of this chanoun, roote of al cursednesse.
He semed frendly to hem that knew him nought,
But he was fendly bothe in werk and thought.
It werieth me to telle of his falsnesse;
And natheles yit wol I it expresse,

[1] Mr. Wright has properly substituted *above*, the reading of the Lansd. MS. and Tyrwhitt, for *alone*, that of the Harl. MS.

[2] That is, what need is there to describe the trick any further, since you can now understand it well enough.

[3] This line must be scanned:—

'Ĭs thĕr ā | nў cō | pĕr hēr | wĭthĭnnĕ | ? quŏd hē.'

[4] The reading in the text is from Tyrwhitt, those of the Harl. MS., *the minister and of his witte*, and of the Lansd. MS., *his monstre and his witte*, being evidently corrupt.

To that entent men may be war therby,
And for noon other cause trewely.
He put this unce of coper in the croslet,
And on the fuyr als swithe he hath it set,
And cast in pouder, and made the prest to blowe,
And in his worching for to stoupe lowe,
As he dede er, and al nas but a jape;
Right as him list the prest he made his ape.
And afterward in the ingot he it cast,
And in the panne putte it atte last
Of water, and in he put his owne hond.
And in his sleeve, as ye byforn-hond
Herde me telle, he had a silver teyne;
He sleyghly took it out, this cursed heyne,
(Unwitynge this prest of his false craft),
And in the pannes botme he hath it laft;
And in the water rumbleth to and fro.
And wonder prively took up also
The coper teyne, (nought knowyng this prest)
And hidde it, and hent him by the brest,
And to him spak, and thus sayde in his game;
'Stoupeth adoun! by God, ye ben to blame;'[1]
Helpeth me now, as I dede yow whil er;
Put in your hond, and loke what is ther.'
This prest took up this silver teyne anoon.
And thanne sayde the chanoun, let us goon
With these thre teynes whiche that we han wrought,
To som goldsmyth, and wite if it be ought.
For by my faith I nolde, for myn hood,
But if they were silver fyn and good,
And that as swithe proved schal it be.'
Unto the goldsmith with these teynes thre
Thay went, and putte these teynes in assay
To fuyr and hammer; might no man say nay,
But that thay were as hem oughte be.
This sotted prest, who was gladder than he?

[1] That is, 'You are to blame in being so remiss in helping me.'

Was never brid gladder agayn the day;
Ne nightyngale in the sesoun of May
Was never noon, that liste better to synge;
Ne lady lustier in carolynge;
Or for to speke of love and wommanhede,
Ne knyght in armes doon[1] an hardy deede
To stonde in grace of his lady deere,
Than hadde this prest this craft for to lere,
And to the chanoun thus he spak and seyde;
'For the love of God, that for us alle deyde,
And as I may deserve it unto yow,
What schal this receyt coste? telleth now.'
'By oure lady,' quod the chanoun, 'it is deere,
I warne yow wel, for, save[2] I and a freere,
In Engelond ther can no man it make.'
'No fors,' quoth he; 'now, sire, for Goddes sake,
What schal I paye? telleth me, I pray.'
'I wis,' quod he, 'it is ful dere I say.
Sire, at a word, if that ye lust it have,
Ye schul pay fourty pound, so God me save;
And nere the frendschipe that ye dede er this[3]
To me, ye schulde paye more, I wys.'
This prest the somme of fourty pound anoon
Of nobles fette, and tooke hem everychoon
To this chanoun, for this ilk receyt.
Al his werkyng nas but fraude and deceyt.
'Sire prest,' he seyde, 'I kepe have no loos[4]
Of my craft, for I wold it kept were cloos;
And as ye loveth me,[5] kepeth it secre.
For and men knewe al my sotilte,

[1] The word *to* would be required before *doon*, in modern English. The construction is, 'No nightingale list better to sing, and no knight to do an hardy deed, than this priest to learn this craft.'

[2] Mr. Wright has judiciously corrected the reading of the Harl MS. *for sire*.

[3] 'And were it not for the act of friendship you have already done for me.'

[4] 'I care to have no praise.' Tyrwhitt's reading, *I kepe for to have no loos*, though not so good as regards the metre, brings out the sense rather better.

[5] This is the Anglo-Saxon form of the plural, *ye lufiath*.

By God, men wolden have so gret envye
To me, bycause of my philosophie,
I schulde be deed, ther were noon other weye.'
'God it forbede,' quoth the prest, 'what ye seye.'[1]
Yet had I lever spenden al the good
Which that I have, (and elles wax I wood)
Than that ye schulde falle in such meschief.'
'For your good wil, sir, have ye right good preef,'
Quoth the chanoun, 'and far wel, *graunt mercy.*'
He went his way, and never the prest him sey
After this day; and whan that this prest scholde
Maken assay, at such tyme as he wolde,
Of this receyt, far wel, it wold not be.
Lo, thus byjaped and bygilt was he;
Thus maketh he his introduccioun
To bringe folk to here destruccioun.
Considereth, sires, how that in ech astaat
Bitwixe men and gold ther is debaat,[2]
So ferforth that unnethe ther is noon.
This multiplying blent so many oon,
That in good faith I trowe that it be
The cause grettest of swich scarsete.
Philosophres speken so mistyly
In this craft, that men conne not come therby,
For any witt that men han now on dayes.
They may wel chiteren, as doon these jayes,
And in here termes sette lust and peyne,
But to her purpos schul thay never atteyne.
A man may lightly lerne, if he have ought,
To multiplie and bringe his good to nought.

The Harl. MS., followed by Mr. Wright, reads *What seye*; but this reading, though agreeing better with the metre, is unsatisfactory as to the sense. It has, therefore, been corrected from Tyrwhitt.

[2] The meaning seems to be, 'Men are so continually making experiments with gold, [admirably expressed by the phrase *holding debate* with it,] and the waste of the precious metals is consequently so great, that there is scarcely any left for purposes of commerce.' This gives the poet an opportunity of producing an apparent paradox in the following lines, where he says, 'This *multiplying* is the cause of the *scarcity*;' and again, 'to *multiply* and bring his good to *nought*.'

Lo, such a lucre is in this lusty game;
A mannes mirthe it wal torne into grame.
And empte also grete and hevy purses,
And make folk for to purchace curses
Of hem, that han her good therto i-lent.
O, fy! for schame, thay that have be brent,
Allas! can thay not fle the fuyres hete?
Ye that it usen, I rede ye it lete,
Lest ye lese[1] al; for bet than never is late;
Never to thrive, were to long a date.
Though he prolle ay, ye schul it never fynde;
Ye ben as bolde as is Bayard the blynde,[2]
That blundreth forth, and peril casteth noon;
He is as bold to renne agayn a stoon,
As for to go bysides in the wey;
So fare ye that multiplie, I sey.
If that youre yghen can nought seen aright,
Loke that youre mynde lakke nought his sight.
For though ye loke never so brode and stare,
Ye schul nought wynne a mite on that chaffare,
But wasten al that ye may rape and renne.[3]
Withdrawe the fuyr, lest it to faste brenne;
Medleth no more with that art, I mene;
For gif ye doon, youre thrift is goon ful clene.
And right as swithe I wol yow telle heere
What philosophres sein in this mateere.

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[1] The Harl. MS. reads *lesen*, which spoils the metre; the final *n* has therefore been dropped, as it very generally is in Chaucer's English.

[2] This was a popular proverb. Mr. Wright quotes a parallel passage from Gower's *Confessio Amantis*:—

> 'Ther is no God, ther is no lawe
> Of whom that he taketh any hede,
> But as *Bayarde the blynde stede*,
> Tille he falle in the diche amidde,
> He goth ther no man wol him bidde.'

[3] Harl. MS., *thay*. The reading in the text is from the Lansd. MS. The meaning is, 'But waste all that you may rape' (or steal), 'and renne' (rend or rob).

Lo, thus saith Arnold of the Newe-toun,
As his Rosarie maketh mencioun,[1]
He saith right thus, withouten eny lye:
Ther may no man Mercury mortifye,
But it be with his brother knowleching.
Lo,[2] how that he, which that first sayd this thing,
Of philosophres fader was, Hermes;[3]
He saith, how that the dragoun douteles
He dyeth nought, but if that he be slayn
With his brother. And that is for to sayn,
By the dragoun, Mercury, and noon other
He understood, and brimstoon be his brother,
That out of Sol and Luna were i-drawe.
'And therfore,' sayde he, 'take heed to my sawe;
Let no man besy him this art to seche,
But if that he thentencioun and speche
Of philosophres understonde can;
And if he do, he is a lewed man.
For this sciens, and this connyng,' quod he,
'Is of the Secre of secretz,[4] parde.'
Also ther was a disciple of Plato,[5]
That on a tyme sayde his maister to,

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[1] Arnald de Villeneuve, in France, a physician of the fourteenth century, and author of the *Rosarius Philosophorum*.

[2] *Lo* is not found in Harl. and Lansd. MSS. It is supplied from Tyrwhitt.

[3] The astrological and philosophical works attributed to this writer are suppositious, none of his genuine writings having come down to us.—See *Cor. Agrip. Van. Scient.*, cap. xlviii. This strange jargon about the dragon Mercury, &c., is that of the Rosicrucians, and their pretended philosophy.

[4] The meaning seems to be, 'And yet if he do understand this jargon, he is *still* a lewd or unlearned man; for the art of multiplying belongs, after all, to the secret of secrets,' (alluding to the treatise called *Secreta Secretorum*, and purporting to be the sum of Aristotle's instructions to Alexander,) that is to say, 'it cannot be discovered by learned or unlearned.'

[5] This story is told in the *Senioris Zadith fil. Hamuelis Chymica*, and is there attributed to Solomon. 'Dixit Solomon rex, Recipe lapidem qui dicitur Thitarios. Dixit sapiens, Assigna mihi illum. Dixit, est corpus magnesiæ. Dixit, quid est magnesia? Respondit, Magnesia est aqua composita. See Tyrwhitt.

As his book Senior wil bere witnesse,
And this was his demaunde in sothfastnesse:
'Tel me the name of thilke prive stoon.'
And Plato answered unto him anoon,
'Take the stoon that titanos men name.'
'Which is that?' quod he. 'Magnasia is the same,'
Sayde Plato. 'Ye, sire, and is it thus?
That is *ignotum per ignotius.*
What is magnasia, good sir, I you pray?'
'It is a water that is maad, I say,
Of elementes foure,' quod Plato.
'Telle me the rotte,[1] good sire,' quod he tho,
Of that water, if it be your wille.'
'Nay, nay,' quod Plato, 'certeyn that I nylle.
The philosophres sworn were everichoon,
That thay ne scholde discovere it unto noon,
Ne in no book it write in no manere;
For unto Crist it is so leef and deere,
That he wil not that it discovered be,[2]
But wher it liketh to his deite
Man to enspire, and eek for to defende
Whom that him liketh; lo, this is the ende.'
Than thus conclude I, syn that God of hevene
Ne wol not that the philosophres nevene,
How that a man schal come unto this stoon,
I rede as for the beste, let it goon.
For who so maketh God his adversarie,
As for to werke eny thing in contrarie
Unto his wil, certes never schal he thrive,
Though that he multiplie terme of al his lyve.[3]

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[1] Harl. MS. reads *rooche*, which is corrected by Mr. Wright.

[2] Perhaps an allusion to Prov. xxv. 2. 'It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.'

[3] This is a difficult line to scan. It consists of eleven syllables, as many others do, but the manner in which the accented and unaccented ones are combined is very unusual. The ear suggests that it should be read thus:—

'Thŏugh thāt | hĕ mūl | tĭplĭe tĕrme | ŏf āl | hĭs lyve.'

Terme, of course, means *for the term*.

And ther a poynt; for ended is my tale.
God send every trewe man boote of his bale![1]

THE DOCTOURES PROLOGE.[2]

'YE, let that passen,' quod oure Hoste, 'as now.
Sire Doctour of Physike, I praye you,
Tel us a tale of som honest matere.'
'It schal be don, if that ye wol it here,'
Said this Doctour, and his tale began anon.
'Now, good men,' quod he, 'herkeneth everichon.'

THE TALE OF THE DOCTOR OF PHISIK.

[THE original narrator of this tale is Livy; but it is not easy to determine whether Chaucer derived it directly from him, or through the medium of some translation or version. It is introduced in the *Roman de la Rose* and in Gower's *Confessio Amantis;* from which works some have supposed it was taken by Chaucer. The conjecture that the story was borrowed from either of these sources is hardly reconcileable with probability; for it seems almost incredible that a man of Chaucer's erudition should not have known in the original an author so much read in the middle ages, and whose works were to be found in the library of every con-

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[1] This is the usual termination of tales by mediæval writers, who thought it necessary to begin and end every work with an act of religion. The phrase occurs in the ballad of *Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne*, (see vol. 1, p. 241, note 1,) and means, 'May God send every true man relief in his misfortune.'

[2] In the Harl. and other good MSS., there is no prologue to *The Doctor's Tale*. The Lansd. MS. has one not at all in Chaucer's style, in the metre of *The Cokе's Tale of Gamelyn*, a kind of verse which Chaucer never uses. The prologue given in the text is adopted by Tyrwhitt from one MS., and though not in the poet's style, is, at least, in his metre.

siderable abbey in the country. Warton, in his second dissertation, enumerates Livy among the authors whose works were most frequently transcribed between the eighth and thirteenth centuries, and they occur in the catalogue of the library at Glastonbury, given in Hearne's edition of the *Chron. Joh. Glaston.*, written in 1248. They were among the first classical works translated into the modern languages. A French version was undertaken before the year 1364, by Pierre Bercheur, Prior of St. Eloi, at Paris, at the desire of King John of France; and a beautiful copy of his works was presented by the Regent Bedford, in the next century, to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, the celebrated patron of learning. If, therefore, Chaucer did not apply to the original Latin, he probably derived his knowledge of the story at least from a French translation, rather than from the poetical versions of his predecessors or contemporaries. That he appreciated the Patavinian may be inferred from his placing his name on the same pillar with Homer's in his *House of Fame.*

The story itself, thus clothed in Chaucer's pure and expressive English, and illumined by his brilliant imagination, has a peculiar interest at the present day, when the institution of slavery, which Christianity had driven from Europe, has been retained in the New World by a people of our own race and language. The affecting incident upon which the tale is founded was probably not of unusual occurrence; but the case of Virginius acquired its special interest from the fact of its having produced a political revolution. The Plays of Terence reveal the same results at Athens; and recent disclosures have shown that the scene before the judgment-seat of Appius is still not unfrequently enacted in the courts of justice in New York.]

THER was, as telleth Titus Lyvius,
A knight, that cleped was Virginius,
Fulfild of honours and of worthines,
And strong of frendes, and of gret riches.

This knight a doughter hadde by his wyf,[1]
And never ne hadde he mo in al his lyf.
Fair was this mayde in excellent beaute
Above every wight that men may se;
For Nature hath with sovereyn diligence
I-formed hir in so gret excellence,
As though sche wolde say, 'Lo, I, Nature,
Thus can I forme and peynte a creature,
Whan that me lust; who can me counterfete?
Pigmalion?[2] nought, though he alwey forge and bete,
Or grave, or peynte; for I dar wel sayn,
Apelles, Zeuxis,[3] schulde wirche in vayn,
Other to grave, or paynte, or forge or bete,
If thay presumed me to counterfete.
For He that is the Former principal
Hath maad me his viker general,
To forme and peynte erthely creature
Right as me lust, al thing is in my cure
Under the moone that may wane and waxe,[4]
And for my werke no thing wol I axe;
My lord and I ben fully at accord.
I made hir to the worschip of my Lord;
So do I alle myn other creatures,
What colour that thay been, or what figures.'
Thus semeth me that Nature wolde say.
This mayde was of age twelf yer and tway,

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[1] The Harl. and Lansd. MSS. omit *This knight.*

[2] Ovid, *Metamorph.*, lib. x.

[3] The Harl. and Lansd. MSS. read corruptly *Apollus, Zepherus.*

[4] The introduction of *Nature* as a power between the Creator and the creature is the germ of the heathen pantheism, which revived with the revival of classical learning, and manifested itself in the general infidelity of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This subtle form of atheism is thus reproved by Cowper:—

'The Lord of all, himself through all diffused,
Sustains, and is the life of all that lives.
Nature is but a name for an effect
Whose cause is God.'—*Task; Winter Walk at Noon.*

St. Paul's doctrine, that angels are the 'ministers of God,' to execute his decrees with regard to the creation, is quite a different thing.

In which that nature hath suche delite.
For right as sche can peynte a lili white
And rody a rose, right with such peynture
Sche peynted hath this noble creature
Er sche was born, upon her limes fre,
Wheras by right such colours schulde be;[1]
And Phebus deyed hadde hire tresses grete,
I-lyk to the stremes of his borned hete.[2]
And if that excellent was hir beaute,
A thousand fold more vertuous was sche.
In hire ne lakketh no condicioun,
That is to preyse, as by discrecioun.
As wel in body as goost chaste was sche;
For which sche floured in virginite,
With alle humilite and abstinence,
With alle attemperaunce and pacience,
With mesure eek of beryng and[3] array.
Discret sche was in answeryng alway,
Though[4] sche were wis as Pallas, dar I sayn.
Hir facound eek ful wommanly and playn;
Noon countrefeted termes hadde sche
To seme wys; but after hir degre
Sche spak, and alle hire wordes more or lesse
Sounyng in vertu and in gentilesse.
Schamefast sche was in maydenes schamfastnesse,
Constant in hert, and ever in besynesse,
To dryve hire out of idel slogardye.
Bachus had of hir mouth no maistrye;
For wyn and thought[5] doon Venus enǫrece,
As men in fuyr wil caste oyle or grece.

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[1] The reading of the Harl MS., *Here als bright as such colour schulde be*, is corrected from Tyrwhitt.

[2] Tyrwhitt reads, *Like to the stremes*, &c., which is better, as far as the metre is concerned. The meaning is, 'Her tresses were yellow, and shining like the burning rays of the sun.'

[3] The Harl. MS., for *and*, reads *of*.

[4] *Though* is written *tho* in Speght, and means 'then.'

[5] The Harl MS., for *wyn*, reads *wille*. For *thought*, Tyrwhitt reads *youthe*, and proposes *slouthe*, for which there is no authority, as a better

And of hir oughne vertu unconstreigned,
Sche hath ful ofte tyme hire seek y-feyned,
For that sche wolde fleen the companye,
Wher likly was to treten of folye,
As is at festes, reveles, and at daunces,
That ben occasiouns of daliaunces.
Such thinges maken children for to be
To soone rype and bold, as men may se,
Which is ful perilous, and hath ben yore;
For al to soone may sche lerne lore
Of boldenesse, whan sche is a wyf.
And ye maystresses in youre olde lyf
That lordes doughtres han in governaunce,
Ne taketh of my word no displesaunce;
Thinketh that ye ben set in governynges
Of lordes doughtres, oonly for tuo thinges;
Outher for ye han kept your honeste,
Other elles for ye han falle in frelete,
And knowe wel y-nough the olde daunce,
And conne forsake fully such meschaunce
For evermo; therfore, for Cristes sake,
Kepeth wel tho that ye undertake.
A theof of venisoun, that hath for-laft
His licorousnesse, and al his theves craft,
Can kepe a forest best of every man.[1]
Now kepe hem wel, for and ye wil ye can;
Loke wel, that ye unto no vice assent,
Lest ye be dampned for your wikked entent,
For who so doth, a traytour is certayn;
And taketh keep of that that I schal sayn;
Of al tresoun sovereyn pestilence
Is, whan a wight bytrayeth innocence.

---

reading. But thought, or the indulgence of day-dreams or reveries, is the fruit of sloth, and expresses what the poet means better than *sloth* would have done, because it shows *how* it is that sloth and idleness 'doon Venus encrece.'

[1] This has passed into a proverb, 'Set a thief to catch a thief.' A *ci-devant* poacher always makes the best gamekeeper.

Ye fadres, and ye modres eek also,
Though ye han children, be it oon or mo,
Youre is the charge of al her sufferaunce,[1]
Whiles thay be under your governaunce.
Beth war, that by ensample of youre lyvynge,
Outher by necgligence in chastisynge,
That thay ne perische; for I dar wel seye,
If that thay doon, ye schul ful sore abeye.
Under a schepherd softe and necligent,
The wolf hath many a schep and lamb to-rent.
Sufficeth oon ensample now as here,
For I moot turne agein to my matiere.

This mayde, of which I telle my tale expresse,
So kept hir self, hir neded no maystresse;
For in hir lyvyng maydens might rede,
As in a book, every good word and dede,
That longeth unto a mayden vertuous;
Sche was so prudent and so bounteous.
For which the fame outsprong on every syde
Bothe of hir beaute and hir bounte wyde;
That thurgh the lond thay praysed hir ilkoone,
That lovede vertu, save envye alloone,
That sory is of other mennes wele,
And glad is of his sorwe and unhele.
The doctor[2] made this descripcioun.
This mayde wente on[3] a day into the toun
Toward the temple, with hir moder deere,
As is of yonge maydenes the manere.

---

[1] Tyrwhitt reads *surveance*, which yields a more obvious meaning; but the reading in the text, which is Speght's, as also that of the Harl. and Lansd. MSS., may mean, 'Yours is the responsibility for any liberty you may allow them.'

[2] Tyrwhitt says, that in the margin of one of the MSS. is written 'Augustinus,' but doubts whether Chaucer meant to quote him by the name of 'the Doctour:' in *The Persones Tale*, however, in the description of envy, these very words are attributed to St. Austin. 'And, after the word of St. Austyn, is it' (*scil.*, invidia) 'sorwe of other mennes wele, and joye of other mennes harm.'

[3] The Harl. MS. reads *upon*, which made it impossible to scan the line. *On* has been substituted from Tyrwhitt.

Now was ther than a justice in the toun,
That governour was of that regioun.
And so bifel, this juge his eyghen cast
Upon this mayde, avysing hir ful fast,
As sche cam forby ther the juge stood.
Anoon his herte chaunged and his mood,
So was he caught with beaute of this mayde,
And to him self ful prively he sayde,
'This mayde schal be myn for any man.'
Anoon the feend into his herte ran,
And taughte him sodeinly, that he by slighte
This mayde to his purpos wynne mighte.
For certes, by no fors, ne by no mede,
Him thought he was not able for to speede;
For sche was strong of frendes, and eek sche
Confermed was in such sovenayne bounte[1]
That wel he wist he might hir never wynne,
As for to make hir with hir body synne.
For which with gret deliberacioun
He sent after a clerk was in the toun,
The which he knew for subtil and for bold.
This juge unto the clerk his tale hath told
In secre wyse, and made him to assure,
He schulde telle it to no creature;
And if he dede he schulde lese his heed.
Whan that assented was this cursed reed,
Glad was the juge, and made him gret cheere,
And gaf him giftes precious and deere.
Whan schapen was al this conspiracye
Fro poynt to poynt, how that his lecherie
Parformed scholde be ful subtilly,
As ye schul here after-ward openly,
Hom goth this clerk, that highte Claudius.
This false juge, that highte Apius,—
(So was his name, for it is no fable,
But knowen for a storial thing notable;

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *conformed beauté*. Tyrwhitt's reading has been substituted as supplying a better sense.

The sentence of it soth is out of doubte),—
This false jugge goth now fast aboute
To hasten his delit al that he may.
And so bifel, soone after on a day
This false juge, as telleth us the story,
As he was wont, sat in his consistory,
And gaf his domes upon sondry caas;
This false clerk com forth a ful good paas,
And saide, 'Lord, if that it be your wille,
As doth me right upon this pitous bille,
In which I pleyne upon Virginius.
And if he wile seyn it is nought thus,
I wil it prove, and fynde good witnesse,
That soth is that my bille wol expresse.'
The juge answerd, 'Of this in his absence
I may not give diffinityf sentence.
Let do him calle, and I wol gladly hiere;
Thou schalt have alle right, and no wrong heere.
Virginius com to wite the jugges wille,
And right anoon was red this cursed bille;
The sentence of it was as ye schul heere.

'To yow, my lord sire Apius so deere,
Scheweth youre pore servaunt Claudius,
How that a knight called Virginius,
Ageins the lawe, agens alle equyte,
Holdeth, expresse ageinst the wille of me,
My servaunt, which that my thral is by right,
Which fro myn hous was stolen on a night
Whiles sche was ful yong, that wol I preve
By witnesse, lord, so that ye yow not greve;
Sche is nought his doughter, what so he say,
Wherfore to yow, my lord the jugge, I pray,
Yelde me my thralle, if that it be your wille.'
Lo, this was al the sentence of the bille.

Virginius gan upon the clerk byholde;
But hastily, er he his tale tolde,
And wolde have proved it, as schold a knight,
And eek by witnessyng of many a wight,

That al was fals that sayde his adversarie,
This cursed juge wold no lenger tarye,
Ne heere a word more of Virginius,
But gaf his jugement, and saide thus;
'I deme anoon this clerk his servaunt have.
Thou schalt no lengur in thin hous hir save.'[1]
Go bringe hir forth, and put hir in oure warde.
This clerk schal have his thral; thus I awarde.'
And whan this worthy knight Virginius,
Thurgh thassent of this juge Apius,
Moste by force his deere doughter given
Unto the juge, in lecchery to lyven,
He goth him hom, and sette him in his halle,
And leet anoon his deere doughter calle;
And with a face deed as aisshen colde,
Upon hir humble face he gan byholde,
With fadres pite stiking thorugh his herte,
Al wolde he from his purpos not converte.
'Doughter,' quod he, 'Virginia by name,
Ther ben tuo weyes, eyther deth or schame,
That thou most suffre, allas that I was bore!
For never thou deservedest wherfore
To deyen with a swerd or with a knyf.
O deere doughter, ender of my lyf,
Which I have fostred up with such plesaunce,
That thou nere never oute of my remembraunce;
O doughter, which that art my laste wo,
And in this lif my laste joye also,
O gemme of chastite, in pacience
Tak thou thy deth, for this is my sentence;
For love and not for hate thou must be deed,
My pitous hond mot smyten of thin heed.
Allas that ever Apius the say!
Thus hath he falsly jugged the to day.'
And told hir al the caas, as ye bifore
Han herd, it needeth nought to telle it more.

---

1 The Harl. MS. reads *have*. *Save* is from the Lansd. MS.

'Mercy, deere fader,' quod this mayde.
And with that word sche bothe hir armes layde
Aboute his nekke, as sche was want to doo,
(The teeres brast out of hir eyghen two),
And sayde: 'Goode fader, schal I dye?
Is ther no grace? is ther no remedye?'
'No, certeyn, deere doughter myn,' quod he.
'Than geve me leve, fader myn,' quod sche,
'My deth for to compleyne a litel space;
For pardy Jepte[1] gaf his doughter grace
For to compleyne, er he hir slough, allas!
And God it woot, no thing was hir trespas,
But that sche ran hir fader first to se,
To welcome him with gret solempnite.'
And with that word aswoun sche fel anoon,
And after, whan hir swownyng was agoon,
Sche riseth up, and to hir fader sayde;
'Blessed be God, that I schal deye a mayde.
Geve me my deth, er that I have a schame.
Do with your child your wille, a goddes name!'
And with that word sche prayed him ful ofte,
That with his swerd he schulde smyte hir softe;
And with that word on swoune doun sche fel.
Hir fader, with ful sorwful hert and fel,
Hir heed of smoot, and by the top it hente,
And to the juge bigan it to presente,
As he sat in his doom in consistory.
And whan the juge it say, as saith the story,
He bad to take him, and honge him faste.
But right anoon alle the poeple[2] in thraste
To save the knight, for routhe and for pite,
For knowen was the fals iniquite.

---

[1] Judges xi. 38. An allusion to the Bible in the mouth of Virginia is of course an anachronism.

[2] The final *e* is so generally elided before a vowel, that this line should probably be scanned thus:—

'Bŭt rĭght | ănŏon | ällē | thĕ pēo | pl' ĭn thrāste.'

The poeple anoon had suspect in this thing,
By maner of this clerkes chalengyng,
That it was by thassent of Apius;
They[1] wiste wel that he was leccherous.
For which unto this Apius thay goon,
And casten him in prisoun right anoon,
Wher as he slough him self; and Claudius,
That servaunt was unto this Apius,
Was demed for to honge upon a tree;
But Virginius of his gret pite
Prayde for him, that he was exiled,
And elles certes he had ben bigiled.
The remenaunt were anhanged, more and lesse,
That were consented to this cursednesse.
Her may men se how synne hath his merite;
Be war, for no man woot how God wol smyte
In no degre, ne in which maner wise
The worm of conscience wol agrise
Of wicked lyf, though it so pryve be,
That no man woot of it but God and he;
Whether that he be lewed man or lered,
He not how soone that he may be afered.
Therfore I rede yow this counseil take,
Forsakith synne, er synne yow forsake.

THE PROLOGE OF THE PARDONER.

OWRE Ost gan swere as he were wood;
'Harrow!' quod he, 'by nayles[2] and by blood!
This was a cursed thef, a fals justice.
As schendful deth as herte can devise

[1] The reading of the Harl. MS., *that*, which is destitute of meaning, has been corrected from Tyrwhitt.

[2] The nails with which our Lord was fastened to the cross were among what were called 'the instruments of the passion,' and were supposed to have been preserved as relics, like the true cross. They were objects of devotion, and subjects of oaths.

So falle upon his body and his boones!
The devel I bykenne him al at oones!
Allas! to deere boughte sche hir beaute.
Wherfore I say, that alle men may se,
That giftes of fortune or of nature
Ben cause of deth of many a creature.
Hir beaute was hir deth, I dar wel sayn;
Allas! so pitously as sche was slayn!
Of bothe giftes, that I speke of now,[1]
Men han ful often more for harm than prow.
'But trewely, myn owne maister deere,
This was a pitous tale for to heere;
But natheles, pas over, this is no fors.
I pray to God to save thi gentil corps,
And eek thyn urinals, and thy jordanes,
Thyn Ypocras, and eek thy Galianes,[2]
And every boist ful of thi letuarie,
God blesse hem and oure lady seinte Marie!
So mot I then, thou art a propre man,
And y-lik a prelat,[3] by seint Runyan.
Sayde I not wel?[4] can I not speke in terme?
But wel I woot, thou dost myn herte erme,
I have almost y-caught a cardiacle;
By corpus boones, but I have triacle,
Other elles a draught of moyst and corny ale,
Other but I hiere anoon a mery tale,

[1] This and the succeeding line are not found in the Harl. MS., and are given from Tyrwhitt. The argument is that of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal.

[2] The Harl. MS. omits this characteristic couplet. The reader will recollect an example of the use of these vessels in the medical diagnosis of the middle ages in Shakespeare, 2 *Henry IV.*, sc. 2. For the names see vol. i. p. 95, note 3.

[3] The Doctour of Phisik, like most members of the learned professions in the middle ages, was probably in orders, otherwise the poet's declaration of his fitness to be a prelate would have no application. This brings out the point of the sarcasm in the general prologue—

'His reading was ful litel on the bible.'

[4] Tyrwhitt observes, that Shakespeare appears to have had the Host of the Tabard in his eye, when he depicted him of the 'Garter,' in *The Merry Wives of Windsor.*

Myn hert is brost for pite of that mayde.
Thow, pardoner, thou, *belamy*,' he sayde,
'Tel us a tale, for thou canst many oon.'
'It schal be doon,' quod he, 'and that anoon.
But first,' quod he, 'her at this ale-stake[1]
I wil both drynke and byten on a cake.'
But right anoon the gentils gan to crie,
'Nay, let him tellen us no ribaudye.[2]
Tel us som moral thing, that we may leere.'
'Gladly,' quod he, and sayde as ye schal heere.
'But in the cuppe wil I me bethinke
Upon some honest tale, whil I drinke.'—
'Lordyngs,' quod he, 'in chirche whan I preche,
I peyne me to have an hauteyn speche,
And ryng it out, as lowd as doth a belle,
For I can al by rote that I telle.
My teeme is alway oon, and ever was;
Radix omnium malorum est cupiditas.[3]
'First I pronounce whennes that I come,
And thanne my bulles[4] schewe I alle and some;
Oure liege lordes[5] seal upon my patent,
That schewe I first my body to warent,

[1] Speght interprets *ale-stake*, *a maypole*; Tyrwhitt, *a stake* set up before an ale-house for a sign, which seems to be the sense in this place. The stake was probably surmounted by a 'bush,' still used on the continent as the sign of a cabaret, and to which there are so many allusions in the proverbs and popular poetry of the middle ages.

[2] This gives a frightful idea of the corruption to which the sale of indulgences was conducive; the company are actually afraid that the Pardoner, an ecclesiastic who was permitted to preach in the church, will offend their ears with some ribald tale.

[3] 1 Tim. vi. 10.

[4] The Pope's bull, by which an indulgence, or exemption from the temporal punishment of offences against the canons, was granted to those who should perform an act of faith or devotion, by kissing the relics, and contributing money to some pious work. The theory of pardons or indulgences was that no one could obtain or profit by them who was not in a state of grace, that is, unless he had faith and sincerely repented of his sins; but, it is scarcely necessary to add, that this theory was not very strictly observed in practice.

[5] *Scil.*, the Pope's. The system pursued in issuing these indulgences was this:—The court of Rome granted the privilege of distributing them to some religious order, for which that order paid a certain sum, and then made the most of their bargain.

That no man be so hardy, prest ne clerk,
Me to destourbe of Cristes holy werk.
And after that than tell I forth my tales.[1]
Bulles of popes, and of cardynales,
Of patriarkes, and of bisshops, I schewe,
And in Latyn speke I wordes fewe
To savore[2] with my predicacioun,
And for to stere men to devocioun.
Thanne schewe I forth my longe crystal stoones,
I-crammed ful of cloutes[3] and of boones,
Reliks thay ben, as wene thei echoon.
Than have I in latoun a schulder boon,
Which that was of an holy Jewes[4] scheep.
Good men,' say I, 'tak of my wordes keep;
If that this boon be waische in eny welle,
If cow, or calf, or scheep, or oxe swelle,
That eny worm hath ete, or worm i-stonge,
Tak water of that welle, and waisch his tonge,
And it is hool anoon. And forthermore
Of pokkes, and of scabbe, and every sore,
Schal every scheep be hool, that of this welle
Drynketh a draught. Tak heed eek what I telle;
If that the goode man, that the beest oweth,
Wol every wike, er that the cok him croweth,

---

[1] This line is omitted in the Harl. MS., probably by a mere clerical error. It is restored from Speght and Tyrwhitt.

[2] For *savore* Tyrwhitt reads *saffron*, and explains it very ridiculously as a metaphor from the spice saffron, which is used to give colour and flavour to meats.

[3] The origin of the veneration for relics may be traced to Acts xix. 12. Hence *cloutes*, or *clothes*, are among the Pardoner's stock.

[4] This must be understood of some Jew before the Incarnation, for an unbelieving and reprobate Jew could hardly have been called *holy*. The shoulder bone of a sheep was supposed to possess some magical virtue, and was a common implement of divination. It is alluded to amongst other forms of sinful conjuration in *The Persones Tale:* 'But let us now go to thilke horrible sweryng of adjuracioun and conjuracioums, as doon these false enchauntours or nigromanciens, in bacines ful of water, or in a bright swerd, in a cercle, or in a fuyr, or in the *schulder bon* of a scheep,' &c.

Fastynge, drynke of this welle a draught,
As thilke holy Jew oure eldres taught,
His beestes and his stoor schal multiplie.
And, sires, also it kelith jalousie.
For though a man be ful in jalous rage,
Let make with this water his potage,
And never schal he more his wyf mystrist,
Though he the soth of hir defaute wist;
Al hadde sche take prestes[1] tuo or thre.
Here is a meteyn eek, that ye may see;
He that his honde put in this metayn,
He schal have multiplying of his grayn,
Whan he hath sowen, be it whete or otes,
So that ye offre pans or elles grootes.
And, men and wommen, oon thing warne I yow;
If eny wight be in this chirche now,
That hath doon synne orrible, that he
Dar nought for schame of it schryven be;
Or ony womman, be sche yong or old,
That hath y-maad hir housbond cokewold,
Such folk schal have no power ne grace
To offre to my relikes in this place.
And who so fint him out of such blame,
Thay wol come up and offre in Goddes name,
And I assoile hem by the auctorite,
Which that by bulle was i-graunted me.[2]
'By this gaude have I wonne every yeer
An hundred mark, syn I was pardoner.
I stonde lik a clerk in my pulpit,
And whan the lewed poeple is doun i-set,
I preche so as ye have herd before,
And telle hem an hondred japes more.
Than peyne I me to strecche forth my necke,
And est and west upon the poeple I bekke,

[1] A sarcasm on the secular clergy.

[2] The reader will observe the art of this. Every one, after such a declaration, would be anxious to prove himself out of such blame, free from such guilt, by coming up to offer to the relics.

As doth a dowfe, syttyng on a berne;[1]
Myn hondes and my tonge goon so yerne,
That it is joye to se my busynesse.
Of avarice and of such cursednesse
Is al my preching, for to make hem fre
To geve here pans, and namely unto me.
For myn entent is nought but for to wynne,
And no thing for correccioun of synne.
I rekke never when thay ben i-beryed,
Though that here soules gon a blakeberyed.[2]
'For certes many a predicacioun
Cometh ofte tyme of evel entencioun;[3]
Som for plesauns of folk and flaterie,
To ben avaunced by ypocrisie;
And som for veine gloir, and som for hate.
For whan I dar not other weys debate,
Than wil I stynge him with my tonge smerte
In preching, so that he schal not asterte
To be diffamed falsly, if that he
Hath trespast to my brethren or to me.
For though I telle not his propre name,
Men schal wel knowe that it is the same
By signes, and by other circumstauuces.
Thus quyt I folk, that doon us displesaunces;
Thus put I out my venym under hiewe
Of holynes, to seme holy and trewe.
But schortly myn entent I wol devyse,
I preche no thing but of coveityse.
Therfor my teem is yit, and ever was,
Radix omnium malorum est cupiditas.
'Thus can I preche agayn the same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.

---

[1] This is a most felicitous simile. The strutting and bowing of a cock-pigeon on the roof of a barn recals the action of a popular orator with ludicrous exactness.

[2] The context shows the meaning of the word, which Skinner interprets, *in nigras et inauspicatas domos missus*. *How* it comes to signify this is not clear.

[3] Philipp. i. 15.

But though my self be gulty in the synne,
Yit can I make other folk to twynne
From avarice, and soone to repent.
But that is not my principal entent;
I preche no thing but for coveitise.
Of this matier it ought i-nough suffise.
'Than telle I hem ensamples many[1] oon
Of olde thinges longe tyme agoon.
For lewed poeple loven tales olde;
Which thinges can thay wel report and holde.
What? trowe ye, whiles I may preche[2]
And wynne gold and silver fer I teche,
That I wil lyve in povert wilfully?
Nay, nay, I thought it never trewely.
For I wol preche and begge in sondry londes.
I wil do no labour with myn hondes,
Ne make basketis[3] and lyve therby,
Bycause I wil nought begge ydelly.
I wol noon of thapostles counterfete;
I wol have money, wolle, chese, and whete,
Al were it geven of the prestes[4] page,
Or of the porest wydow in a village,
And schold hir children sterve for famyn.
Nay, I wol drinke licour of the wyn,
And have a joly wenche in every toun.
But herkneth, lordynges, in conclusioun,
Youre likyng is that I schal telle a tale.
Now have I dronk a draught of corny ale,
By God, I hope I schal telle yow a thing,
That schal by resoun be at your liking;

---

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *may*, evidently by mistake. The reading has been amended from Tyrwhitt.

[2] In this line the first syllable of *whiles*, occurring after the cæsura, takes the place of an iambus, and is to be pronounced emphatically.

[3] Making baskets was the employment of the Egyptian monks in the early ages.—See Fleury's *Eccl. Hist.*

[4] The Lansd. MS. reads *porest page*, in which it is followed by Tyrwhitt; but the reading in the text is more expressive.

For though my self be a ful vicious man,
A moral tale yit I yow telle can,
Which I am wont to preche, for to wynne.
Now hold your pees, my tale I wol byginne.'

THE PARDONERES TALE.

[THE outline of this very beautiful tale is to be found in the *Cento Novelle Antiche*, Nov. lxxxii., and it was, no doubt, a popular apologue in Chaucer's time. The technical and perfunctory manner in which the Pardoner successively addresses himself to each of his topics, displays characteristically his insincerity in the cause of morality which he advocates; and the tale itself furnishes a curious example of the mode in which moral instruction was sometimes conveyed in mediæval preaching; for the Pardoner informs his audience that he has learned the tale for the purpose of introducing it in his sermons.]

IN Flaundres whilom was a companye
Of yonge folkes, that haunteden[1] folye,
As ryot, hasard, stywes, and tavernes;
Wher as with lutes, harpes, and gyternes,
Thay daunce and play at dees bothe day and night,
And ete also, and drynk over her might;
Thurgh which thay doon the devyl sacrifise
Withinne the develes temple, in cursed wise,
By superfluite abhominable.
Her othes been so greet and so dampnable,
That it is grisly for to hiere hem swere.
Our blisful Lordes body thay to-tere;[2]

---

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *haunted*, which is not strictly grammatical, according to the English of Chaucer's time, and, besides, spoils the metre.

[2] They swore by the different parts of our Lord's body, a profane custom still observable in the vulgar oath, 'by blood and wounds.'—See vol. i. p. 214, note 1. This was represented by the preachers of that age as being a crime analogous to that of the Jews, in tearing our Lord's body in pieces.

Hem thoughte Jewes rent him nought y-nough;
And ech of hem at otheres synne lough.
And right anoon ther come tombesteris,
Fetis and smale, and yonge fruitesteres,
Singers with harpes, baudes, wafereres,[1]
Whiche that ben verray develes officeres,
To kyndle and blowe the fuyr of leccherie,
That is anexid unto glotonye.
The holy wryt take I to my witnesse,
That luxury is in wyn and dronkenesse.[2]
Lo, how that dronken Loth[3] unkyndely
Lay by his doughtres tuo unwityngly,
So dronk he was he niste what he wrought.
Herodes, who so wel the story sought,[4]
Whan he of wyn was repleet at his fest,
Right at his oughne table gaf his hest
To sle the baptist Johan[5] ful gilteles.
Seneca seith a good word douteles;
He saith he can no difference fynde
Betuyx a man that is out of his mynde,
And a man the which is dronkelewe;
But that woodnes, fallen in a schrewe,
Persevereth lenger than doth dronkenesse.[6]
O glutonye, ful of corsidnesse;
O cause first of oure confusioun,
O original of oure dampnacioun,
Til Crist had bought us with his blood agayn!
Loketh, how dere, schortly for to sayn,
Abought was first this cursed felonye;
Corupt was al this world for glotonye.

---

[1] This and the following line are omitted in the Harl. MS.

[2] The Harl. MS. has in the margin the reference to Ephes. v. 18. Nolite inebriare vino, in quo est luxuria.

[3] Lot, Gen. xix. 33.

[4] This clause is parenthetical and elliptical, and means, 'As any one knows, who has searched the story well,'—*i. e.* who is well versed in it.

[5] Matt. xiv.

[6] Perhaps he refers to *Epist.* lxxxiii. Extende in plures dies illum ebrii habitum: numquid de furore dubitatis? Nunc quoque non est minor sed brevior.—T.

Adam our fader, and his wyf also,
Fro Paradys to labour and to wo
Were dryven for that vice, it is no drede.
For whils that Adam fasted, as I rede,
He was in Paradis, and whan that he
Ete of the fruyt defendit of a tre,
He was out cast to wo and into peyne.[1]
O glotony, wel ought us on the pleyne!
O, wist a man how many maladyes
Folwith of excesse and of glotonyes,
He wolde be the more mesurable
Of his diete, sittyng at his table.
Allas! the schorte throte, the tendre mouth,
Maketh that Est and West, and North and South,
In erthe, in watir, in ayer, man to swynke,
To gete a sely glotoun mete and drynke.
Of this matier, O Poul, wel canstow trete.
Mete unto wombe, and wombe unto mete,
Schal God destroyen bothe, as Powel saith.[2]
Allas! a foul thing is it by my faith
To say this word, and fouler is the dede,
Whan men so drynke of the whyt and rede,
That of his throte he makith his prive
Thurgh thilke cursed superfluite.
Thapostil[3] wepyng saith ful pitously,
Ther walkith many, of which you told have I,
I say it now wepyng with pitous vois,
Thay are enemys of Cristes croys;
Of which the ende is deth, wombe is her God.
O wombe, o bely, o stynkyng is thi cod,
Fulfild of dong and of corrupcioun;
At eyther ende of the foul is the soun.
How gret cost and labour is the to fynde!
These cokes how they stamp, and streyn, and grynde,

[1] At this line one of the MSS. used by Tyrwhitt quotes *Hieronymus contra Jovinianum*:—Quamdiu jejunavit Adam in Paradyso fuit, comedit et ejectus est. Statim duxit uxorem.

[2] 1 Cor. vi. 13. [3] Philipp. iii 18.

And torne substaunce into accident,[1]
To fulfille thy licorous talent!
Out of the harde boones gete thay
The mary, for thay caste nought away
That may go thurgh the golet softe and soote;
Of spicery and levys, barke and roote,
Schal ben his sause maad to his delyt
To make him have a newe appetit.
But certes he that haunteth suche delices,
Is deed ther, whiles that he lyveth in vices.[2]
A licorous thing is wyn, and dronkenesse
Is ful of stryvyng and of wrecchednesse.
O dronke man, disfigured is thi face,
Sour is thy breth, foul artow to embrace;
And thurgh thi dronken nose[3] sowneth the soun,
As though thou seydest ay, Sampsoun, Sampsoun;[4]
And yit, God wot, Sampson drank never wyn.[5]
Thow fallist, as it were a stiked swyn;
Thy tonge is lost, and al thin honest cure,
For dronkenes is verray sepulture
Of mannes witt and his discrecioun,
In whom that drynk hath dominacioun.
He can no counseil kepe, it is no drede.
Now[6] keep yow from the white and from the rede,

---

[1] An allusion to the philosophy of the Realists, according to which everything is supposed to have a *substance* distinct from the *accidents* of form, taste, colour, smell, &c.; so that, while the accidents remain, the substance may be changed, and *vice versâ*. The cook is said to change the nature and appearance of meats so utterly, that the substance and accidents are confounded; *i. e.*, the form, and colour, and taste do not indicate the real composition of the diet.

[2] Tim. v. 6.

[3] In this line Speght and Tyrwhitt have been followed, in preference to the Harl. MS., which reads:—

'A thurgh thi dronkenesse sowneth the soun.'

[4] The snoring of a drunken man, he means, is like the word Sampsoun.

[5] Judges xiii. 4.

[6] The Harl. MS. reads *Ne*, which is unintelligible. Speght and Tyrwhitt both read *Now*, as in the text.

And namely fro the white wyn of Lepe,[1]
That is to selle in Fleetstreet or in Chepe.
This wyn of Spayne crepith subtily
In other wynes growyng faste by,
Of which ther riseth such fumosite,
That whan a man hath dronke draughtes thre,
And weneth that he be at hom in Chepe,
He is in Spayne, right at the toun of Lepe,
Nought at the Rochel, ne at Burdeaux toun;
And thanne wol thai say, Sampsoun, Sampsoun.
But herken, lordyngs, o word, I you pray,
That alle the soverayn actes, dar I say,
Of victories in the Olde Testament,
Thurgh[2] the verray God omnipotent
Were doon in abstinence and in prayere;
Lokith the Bible, and ther ye may it hiere.
Loke Atthila[3] the grete conquerour,
Deyd in his sleep, with schame and dishonour,
Bleedyng ay at his nose in dronkenesse;
A captayn schuld ay lyve in sobrenesse.

---

[1] According to the geographers, Lepe was not far from Cadiz. This wine, of whatever sort it may have been, was probably much stronger than the Gascon wines usually drunk in England. La Rochelle and Bordeaux, the two chief ports of Gascony, were both, in Chaucer's time, part of the English dominions. Spanish wines might also be more alluring, upon account of their greater rarity. Among the orders of the royal household, in 1604, is the following. [Harl. MSS. 293, fol. 162.] 'And whereas, in tymes past, Spanish wines, called sacke, were little or noe whit used in our courte, and that in later years, though not of ordinary allowance, it was thought convenient that noblemen, &c., might have a boule or glass, &c. We, understanding that it is now used as common drinke, &c., reduce the allowance to xii. gallons a-day for the court, &c.'—T.

[2] The Harl. MS. reads *That thurgh*, which spoils the sense; and if *thurgh* be sounded as a dissyllable, as in Shakespeare, the metre does not require it.

[3] The death of Attila is thus described by Paulus Diaconus, *Gest. Rom.*, lib. xv.:—'Qui reversus ad proprias sedes supra plures quas habebat uxores, valde decoram, indicto nomine, sibi in matrimonium junxit. Ob cujus nuptias profusa convivia exercens, dum tantum vini, quantum nunquam antea insimul bibisset, cum supinus quiesceret, eruptione sanguinis, qui ei de naribus solitus erat effluere, suffocatus et extinctus est.'

And over al this, avyse yow right wel,
What was comaunded unto Lamuel;[1]
Nought Samuel, but Lamuel say I.
Redith the Bible, and fyndeth expresly
Of wyn gevyng to hem that han justice.
No more of this, for it may wel suffice.
And now that I have spoke of glotonye,
Now wil I yow defende hasardrye.
Hasard is verray moder of lesynges,
And of deceipt, and cursed forsweringes;
Blaspheme of Crist, manslaught, and wast also
Of catel, and of tyme; and ferthermo
It is reproef, and contrair of honour,
For to be halde a comun hasardour.
And ever the heyer he is of astaat,
The more is he holden desolaat.
If that a prince use hasardrie,
In alle governance and policie
He is, as by comun opinioun,
Holde the lasse in reputacioun.
Stilbon,[2] that was a wis embasitour,
Was sent unto Corinthe with gret honour
Fro Lacidome, to make hir alliaunce;
And whan he cam, him happede *par chaunce*,
That alle the grettest that were of that lond
Playing atte hasard he hem fond.
For which, as soone as it mighte be,
He stal him hoom agein to his contre,
And saide ther, 'I nyl nought lese my name,
I nyl not take on me so gret diffame,
Yow for to allie unto noon hasardoures.
Sendeth som other wise embasitoures,

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[1] Prov. xxxi. 6.

[2] John of Salisbury (from whom our author probably took this story and the following) calls him Chilon. *Polycrates*, lib. i., c. 5. 'Chilon Lacedæmonius, jungendæ societatis causâ missus Corinthum, duces et seniores populi ludentes invenit in aleâ. Infecto itaque negotio reversus est,' &c.—T.

For by my trouthe, me were lever dye,
Than I yow scholde to hasardours allye.
For ye, that ben so glorious in honoures,
Schal not allie yow with hasardoures,
As by my wil, ne as by my trete.'
This wise philosophre thus said he.
Lo eek how that the king Demetrius[1]
The king of Parthes, as the book saith us,
Sent him a paire dees of gold in scorn,
For he had used hasard ther to-forn;
For which he hield his gloir and his renoun
At no valieu or reputacioun.
Lordes may fynde other maner play
Honest y-nough to dryve away the day.
Now wol I speke of othes fals and grete
A word or tuo, as other bookes entrete.
Gret swering is a thing abhominable,
And fals swering is more reprovable.
The hyhe God forbad sweryng at al,
Witnes on Mathew,[2] but in special
Of sweryng saith the holy Jeremye,[3]
Thou schalt say soth thin othes, and not lye;
And swere in doom, and eek in rightwisnes;
But ydel sweryng is a cursednes.
Bihold and se, ther in the firste table
Of hihe Goddes heste honurable,
How that the secounde heste[4] of him is this;
Tak not in ydel my name or amys.
Lo, rather he forbedith such sweryng,
Than homicide, or many a corsed thing.
I say that as by order[5] thus it stondith;
This knoweth he that the hestes understondeth.

[1] See Shakespeare, *Henry V.*, Act i., sc. 2.
[2] Matt. v. 34. [3] Jerem. iv. 2.
[4] 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,' is called the second heste or commandment, because the preceding two, forbidding idolatry, are considered as one.
[5] That is, God appears to forbid swearing more pointedly even than murder, because this commandment comes before the sixth.

How that the second hest of God is that.
And forthermore, I wol the telle a plat,
That vengance schal not parte fro his hous,
That of his othes is outrageous.
'By Goddes precious hert, and by his nayles,[1]
And by the blood of Crist, that is in Hayles,[2]
Seven is my chaunce, and also cink and tray!
By Goddes armes, and thou falsly play,
This daggere schal thurgh thin herte goo!'
This fruyt cometh of the bicchid boones[3] tuo,
Forswering, ire, falsnes, homicide.
Now for the love of Crist that for us dyde,
Levith youre othis, bothe gret and smale.
But, sires, now wol I telle forth my tale.
These riottoures thre, of which I telle,
Longe erst than prime[4] rong of eny belle,
Were set hem in a tavern for to drynke;
And as thay sat, thay herd a bell clinke[5]

---

[1] *i.* e., with which he was nailed to the cross. Sir John Mandeville, c. vii. says, 'And thereby in the walle is the place where the four nayles of oure Lord weren hidd; for he had two in his hondes and two in his feet; and of one of theise the emperour of Constantynoble made a brydille to his hors, to bere him in batayllе; and thorghe vertue thereof he overcam his enemies, &c.'—T.

[2] The abbey of Hailes, in Gloucestershire, was founded by Richard, king of the Romans, brother to Henry III. This relick, which was afterwards commonly called 'the blood of Hailes,' was brought out of Germanie by the son of Richard, Edmund, who bestowed a third part of it upon his father's abbey of Hailes, and, some time after, gave the other two parts to an abbey of his own foundation at Ashrug, near Berkhamstead. Holinshead, v. ii. p. 275.—T.

[3] *Bicchid* and *bicchel* bones, which latter is adopted by Tyrwhitt, seems to have been used indifferently to signify *dice*. Kilian explains *bickel, talus*, ovillus et lusorius. Mr. Wright, in a note on this place, quotes, in illustration, a passage from the Towneley mystery of the *Processus Talentorum*. The soldiers are represented as playing at dice for our Lord's tunic, and he who has lost exclaims:—

'I was falsly bygyled with thise *byched bones*,
Ther cursyd thay be!'

[4] See vol. i. p. 218, note 2.

[5] A small bell used formerly to be rung before the corpse, as it was carried to the grave, to give notice to those who were charitably disposed that they might pray for the soul of the deceased. Our 'passing bell' has the same origin, though the reason for it has ceased.

Biforn a corps, was caried to the grave;
That oon of hem gan calle unto his knave,
'Go bet,'[1] quoth he, 'and axe redily,
What corps is that, that passeth her forthby;
And loke that thou report his name wel.'
'Sire,' quod he, 'but that nedeth never a del;
It was me told er ye com heer two houres;
He was, pardy, an old felaw of youres,
And sodeinly he was i-slayn to night;
For dronk as he sat on his bench upright,
Ther com a prive thef, men clepen Deth,
That in this contre al the peple sleth;
And with his spere he smot his hert a-two,
And went his way withoute wordes mo.
He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence.[2]
And, maister, er ye come in his presence,
Me thinketh that it is ful necessarie,
For to be war of such an adversarie;
Beth redy for to meet him evermore.
Thus taughte me my dame, I say nomore.'
'By seinte Mary!' sayde this taverner,
'The child saith soth; for he hath slayn this yeer,
Hens over a myle, withinne a gret village,
Bothe man and womman, child, and hyne,[3] and page;
I trowe his habitacioun be there.
To ben avysed gret wisdom it were,
Er that he dede a man that dishonour.'
'Ye, Goddis armes!' quod this ryottour,
'Is it such peril with him for to meete?
I schal him seeke by way and eek by strete,

---

[1] This expression occurs in *The Legende of Gode Women*:—

'The herd of hartes founden is anon,
With hey, *go bet*, pricke thou, let gon, let gon.'—T.

It seems to mean 'Go out,' as 'Go ben,' in Scotland, means go in.

[2] Perhaps an allusion to the great pestilence that devastated Europe in the fourteenth century. *This pestilence* means *during* this pestilence, as *this year* means *during* this year.

[3] The Harl. MS. omits *and hyne*, which is restored from Tyrwhitt.

I make avow to Goddis digne boones!
Herkneth, felaws, we thre ben al oones;
Let ech of us hold up his hond to other,[1]
And ech of us bycome otheres brother,[2]
And we wil slee this false traitour Deth;
He schal be slayne, that so many sleeth,
By Goddis dignete, er it be night!'
Togideres han these thre here trouthes plight
To lyve and dye ech of hem with other,
As though he were his oughne boren[3] brother.
And up thai startyn, al dronke in this rage,
And forth thai goon towarder that village,
Of which the taverner hath spoke biforn,
And many a grisly oth than han thay sworn,
And Cristes blessed body thay to-rent,[4]
Deth schal be deed, if that they may him hent.
Right as thay wolde have torned over a style,
Whan thai han goon nought fully a myle,
An old man and a pore with hem mette.
This olde man ful mekely hem grette,
And saide thus, 'Lordynges, God yow se!'
The proudest of the ryotoures thre
Answerd agein, 'What? carle, with sory grace,
Why artow al for-wrapped save thi face?
Whi lyvest thou so longe in so gret age?'
This olde man gan loke on his visage
And saide thus, 'For that I can not fynde
A man, though that I walke into Inde,
Neither in cite noon, ne in village,
That wol chaunge his youthe for myn age;
And therfore moot I have myn age stille
As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille.

[1] This is still the ceremony used in taking an oath in courts of justice in Prussia. [2] See vol. i. p. 124, note 1.

[3] The reading in the text, which is taken from Tyrwhitt, is preferable to that of the Harl. MS., which reads *sworne*; because they were already *sworn* brothers, and to say that they would act *as if* they were sworn brothers would be improper.

[4] See *ante*, p. 73, note 2.

And Deth, allas! ne wil not have my lif.
Thus walk I lik a resteles caytif,
And on the ground, which is my modres gate,
I knokke with my staf, erly and late,
And saye, 'Leeve moder, let me in.
Lo, how I wane, fleisch, and blood, and skyn.
Allas! whan schuln my boones ben at rest?
Moder, with yow wil I chaunge my chest,
That in my chamber longe tyme hath be,
Ye, for an haire clout to wrap in me.'[1]
But yet to me sche wol not do that grace,
For which ful pale and welkid is my face.
But, sires, to yow it is no curtesye
To speke unto an old man vilonye,
But he trespas in word or elles in dede.
In holy writ[2] ye may your self wel rede,
Agens an old man, hoor upon his hede,
Ye schold arise; wherefor I yow rede,
Ne doth unto an old man more harm now,
Namore than ye wolde men dede to yow
In age, if that ye may so long abyde.
And God be with you, wherso ye go or ryde!
I moot go thider as I have to goo.'
'Nay, olde cherl, by God! thou schalt not so,'
Sayde that other hasardour anoon;
'Thou partist nought so lightly, by seint Johan!
Thou spak right now of thilke traitour Deth,
That in this contre alle oure frendes sleth;
Have her my trouth, as thou art his aspye;
Tel wher he is, or elles thou schalt dye,
By God and by that holy sacrament!
For sothly thou art oon of his assent

[1] This apostrophe to mother earth is exquisitely simple and pathetic; but the meaning of the last clause is not very evident. The old man would seem to say, 'If you will only receive me, I will willingly change my coffin, which has long stood in my chamber in expectation of my death, for even a hair-cloth to wrap me in.' If *chest* might be supposed to mean a kind of bed, the idea would be more obvious.

[2] Levit. xix. 32.

To slen us yonge folk, thou false theef.'
'Now, sires, than if that yow be so leef
To fynde Deth, torn up this croked way,
For in that grove I laft him, by my fay,
Under a tree, and ther he wil abyde;
Ne for your bost he nyl him no thing hyde.
Se ye that ook? right ther ye schuln him fynde.
God save yow, that bought agein mankynde,
And yow amend.' Thus sayde this olde man,
And everich of these riotoures ran,
Til thay come to the tre, and ther thay founde
Of florins fyn of gold y-coyned rounde,
Wel neygh a seven busshels, as hem thought.
No lenger thanne after Deth thay sought;
But ech of hem so glad was of that sight,
For that the florens so faire were and bright,
That doun thai sette hem by that precious hord.
The yongest of hem spak the firste word.
'Bretheren,' quod he, 'take keep what I schal say;
My witte is gret, though that I bourde and play.
This tresour hath fortune to us given
In mirth and jolyte our lif to lyven,
And lightly as it comth, so wil we spende.
Ey, Goddis precious dignite! who wende
To day, that we schuld have so fair a grace?
But might this gold be caried fro this place
Hom to myn hous, or ellis unto youres,
(For wel I wot that this gold is nought oures),
Than were we in heyh felicite.
But trewely by day it may not be;
Men wolde say that we were theves stronge,
And for oure tresour doon us for to honge.
This tresour moste caried be by night
As wysly and as slely as it might.
Wherfore I rede, that cut[1] among us alle
We drawe, and let se wher the cut wil falle;

[1] See vol. i. p. 110, note 5.

And he that hath the cut, with herte blithe
Schal renne to the toun, and that ful swithe,
'And bring us bred and wyn ful privelý;
And tuo of us schal kepe subtilly
This tresour wel; and if he wil not tarie,
Whan it is night, we wol this tresour carie
By oon assent, ther as us liketh best.'
That oon of hem the cut brought in his fest,
And bad hem drawe and loke wher it wil falle;
And it fel on the yongest of hem alle;
And forth toward the toun he went anoon.
And al so soone as he was agoon,
That oon of hem spak thus unto that other;
'Thow wost wel that thou art my sworne brother,
Thy profyt wol I telle the anoon.
Thow wost wel that our felaw is agoon,
And her is gold, and that ful gret plente,
That schal departed be among us thre.
But natheles, if I can schape it so,
That it departed were bitwix us tuo,
Had I not doon a frendes torn to the?'
That other answerd, 'I not how that may be;
He wot wel that the gold is with us tway.
What schulde we than do? what schuld we say?'
'Schal it be counsail?'[1] sayde the ferste schrewe,
'And I schal telle the in wordes fewe
What we schul doon, and bringe it wel aboute.'
'I graunte,' quod that other, 'withoute doute,
That by my trouthe I wil the nought bywray.'
'Now,' quod the first, 'thou wost wel we ben tway,
And two of us schuln strenger be than oon.
Lok, whanne he is sett, thou right anoon
Arys, as though thou woldest with him pleye;
And I schal ryf him thurgh the sydes tweye,

[1] That is, shall it be kept secret? Thus in *A Lytel Geste of Robyn Hode*, in Ritson's collection :—

'Tell me one worde, sayde Robyn,
And *counsell* shall it be.'

Whils that thou strogelest with him as in game,
And with thi dagger loke thou do the same;
And than schal al the gold departed be,
My dere frend, bitwixe the and me;
Than may we oure lustes al fulfille,
And play at dees right at our owne wille.'
And thus accorded ben these schrewes twayn,
To sle the thridde, as ye herd me sayn.
This yongest, which that wente to the toun,
Ful fast in hert he rollith up and doun
The beaute of the florins newe and bright;
'O Lord!' quod he, 'if so were that I might
Have al this gold unto my self alloone,
Ther is no man that lyveth under the troone
Of God, that schulde lyve so mery as I.'
And atte last the feend, oure enemy,
Put in his thought, that he schuld poysoun beye,
With which he mighte sle his felaws tweye.
For why, the feend fond him in such lyvynge,
That he had leve to sorwe him to brynge.
For this witterly was his ful entent
To slen hem bothe, and never to repent.
And forth he goth, no lenger wold he tary,
Into the toun unto a potecary,
And prayde him that he him wolde selle
Som poysoun, that he might his rattis quelle.
And eek ther was a polkat in his hawe,
That, as he sayde, his capouns had i-slawe;
And said he wold him wreke, if that he might,
On vermyn, that destroyed him by night.
Thapotecary answerd: 'And thou schalt have
A thing that, also God my soule save,
In al this world ther nys no creature,
That ete or dronk had of this confecture,
Nought but the mountaunce of a corn of whete,
That he ne schuld his lif anoon for-lete;
Ye, sterve he schal, and that in lasse while,
Than thou wilt goon a paas not but a myle,

The poysoun is so strong and violent.'
This cursed man hath in his hond i-hent
This poysoun in a box, and sins he ran
Into the nexte stret unto a man,
And borwed of him large botels thre;
And in the two his poysoun poured he;
The thrid he keped clene for his drynke,
For al the night he schop him for to swynke
In carying the gold out of that place.
And whan this riotour, with sory grace,
Hath fillid with wyn his grete botels thre,
To his felaws agein repaireth he.

What nedith it therof to sermoun more?
For right as thay had cast his deth bifore,
Right so thay han him slayn, and that anoon.
And whan this was i-doon, thus spak that oon:
'Now let us drynk and sitte, and make us mery
And siththen we wil his body bery.'
And afterward it happed him *par cas*,
To take the botel ther the poysoun was,
And drank, and gaf his felaw drink also,
For whicH anon thay sterved bothe tuo.
But certes I suppose that Avycen[1]
Wrot never in canoun, ne in non fen,
Mo wonder sorwes of empoisonyng,
Than hadde these wrecches tuo or here endyng.
Thus endid been these homicides tuo,
And eek the fals empoysoner also.

O cursed synne ful of cursednesse!
O traytorous homicidy! O wikkednesse!
O glotony, luxurie, and hasardrye!
Thou blasphemour of Crist with vilanye,
And othes grete, of usage and of pride!
Allas! mankynde, how may it bytyde,

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[1] The Harl. MS. reads incorrectly *Amycen*. *Fen*, apparently an Arabic word, is the name given to the sections of Avicenna's great work on physic, entitled *Canun*.—T.

That to thy creatour, which that the wrought,
And with his precious herte-blood the bought,
Thou art so fals and so unkynde, allas!
'Now, good men, God forgeve yow your trespas,
And ware yow fro the synne of avarice.
Myn holy pardoun may you alle warice,
So that ye offren noblis or starlynges,
Or elles silver spones, broches, or rynges,
Bowith your hedes under this holy bulle.
Cometh forth, ye wyves, and offreth your wolle;
Your names I entre her in my rolle anoon;
Into the blis of heven schul ye goon;
I yow assoile by myn heyh power,
If ye woln offre, as clene and eek als cler
As ye were born. And, sires, lo, thus I preche;
And Jhesu Crist, that is oure soules leche,
So graunte yow his pardoun to receyve;
For that is best, I wil not yow disceyve.
But, sires, o word forgat I in my tale;
I have reliks and pardoun in my male,
As fair as eny man in Engelond,
Which were me geve by the popes hond.
If eny of yow wol of devocioun
Offren, and have myn absolucioun,
Cometh forth anon, and knelith her adoun,
And ye schul have here my pardoun.
Or elles takith pardoun, as ye wende,
Al newe and freissch at every townes ende,
So that ye offren alway new and newe
Nobles and pens, which that ben good and trewe.
It is an honour to every that is heer,
That ye may have a suffisaunt pardoner
Tassoile yow in contre as ye ryde,
For aventures which that may bytyde.
For paraunter ther may falle oon, or tuo,
Doun of his hors, and breke his nekke a-tuo.
Loke, such a seurete is to you alle
That I am in your felaschip i-falle,

That may assoyle you bothe more and lasse,
Whan that the soule schal fro the body passe.
I rede that oure hoste schal bygynne,
For he is most envoliped in synne.
Com forth, sire ost, and offer first anoon,
And thou schalt kisse the reliquis everichoon,
Ye, for a grote; unbocle anon thi purs.'
'Nay, nay,' quod he, 'than have I Cristes curs!
Let be,' quod he, 'it schal not be, so theech.
Thou woldest make me kisse thin olde breech,
And swere it were a relik of a seynt,
Though it were with thy foundement depeynt.
But by the cros, which that seynt Heleyn[1] fond,
I wold I had thy coylons in myn hond,
In stede of reliks, or of seintuary.
Let cut hem of, I wol help hem to cary;
Thay schul be schryned in an hogges tord.'
This Pardoner answerde nat o word;
So wroth he was, he wolde no word say.
'Now,' quod oure Host, 'I wol no lenger play

[1] Saint Helen, the mother of Constantine, took a great interest in verifying the situations of the various places in Palestine, which are mentioned in Scripture as the scenes of our Lord's life and passion. In this very natural and laudable pursuit she appears to have been the dupe of gross impositions, of which the incident here alluded to is an example. The Emperor Adrian, as is well known, endeavoured to rebuild Jerusalem, in order to show the falsehood of the prophecies regarding its utter desolation; and erected temples and altars to the idols of Rome on its site, that it might be an abomination to the Jews. On Golgotha, it is said, he erected a temple to Venus, which Helen destroyed; and three crosses having been discovered under the foundations, she at once concluded that they were those upon which our Lord and the two thieves had suffered. In order to discover which was that of our Lord, the dead body of a youth, which happened to be passing on its way to the grave, was applied first to one, but without effect; then to another, with the same result; but when it touched the third, the young man was restored to life; and the cross, by means of which the miracle had been performed, was venerated as the 'true cross,' and fragments were scattered all over Europe, and valued as precious memorials of the atonement.—See the *Legende Dorée De l'Invention Saincte Croix.* This incident is commemorated in the calendar prefixed to the Book of Common Prayer on the 3rd of May, under the name of the 'Invention,' *i. e.*, finding, 'of the Cross.'

With the, ne with noon other angry man.'
But right anoon the worthy Knight bygan,
(Whan that he saugh that al the peple lough)
'No more of this, for it is right y-nough.
Sir pardoner, be glad and mery of cheere;
And ye, sir host, that ben to me so deere,
I pray yow that ye kisse[1] the pardoner;
And pardoner, I pray yow draweth yow ner,
And as we dede, let us laugh and play.'
Anon thay kisse, and riden forth her way.

THE SCHIPMANNES PROLOGE.[2]

OUR Hoste upon his stirrops stode anon,
And saide, 'Good men, herkeneth everichon,
This was a thrifty tale for the nones.
Sire parish preest,' quod he, 'for Goddes bones,
Tell us a tale, as was thy forward yore;
I see wel that ye lerned men in lore
Can mochel good, by Goddes dignitee.'
The Person him answerd: '*Benedicite!*
What eileth the man, so sinfully to swere?'
Our Hoste answerd: 'O Jankin, be ye there?
Now, good men,' quod our Hoste, 'herkneth to me.
I smell a loller[3] in the wind,' quod he,
'Abideth for Goddes digne passion,
For we schul han a predication;
This loller here wol prechen us somwhat.'
'Nay by my fathers soule! that schal he nat,'

[1] In the early and middle ages kissing was the common form of salutation, and the *osculum pacis* was a sign of reconciliation and charity. Examples will occur to every reader of Scripture and the classics.

[2] In all editions previous to Tyrwhitt this prologue was prefixed to *The Squyeres Tale*; but Tyrwhitt, perceiving the impropriety of assigning the expressions occurring in it to the 'courteys squyer,' adopted the arrangement which has been here followed on the authority of the Harl. MS.

[3] See note 1, following page.

Sayde the Schipman; 'here schal he nat preche,
He schal no gospel glosen here ne teche.
We leven al in the gret God,' quod he.
'He wolden sowen som difficultee,
Or springen cockle[1] in our clene corne.
And therfore, hoste, I warne thee beforne,
My joly body schal a tale telle,
And I schal clinken you so mery a belle,
That I schal waken al this compagnie;
But it schal not ben of philosophie,
Ne of physike, ne termes queinte of lawe;
Ther is but litel Latin in my mawe.'

THE SCHIPMANNES TALE.

[SPEGHT supposes that the original of this tale is the first of the eighth day of the *Decameron;* but it is much more probable, as Tyrwhitt suggests, that both Chaucer and Boccaccio derived the outline of their versions from some early *fabliau.* Its grossness is much to be regretted, for it is in Chaucer's best comic style, displaying all his powers of humour and picturesque description, and supplying invaluable illustrations of the domestic manners and ecclesiastical customs of the middle ages.]

A MARCHAUNT whilom dwelled at Seint Denys,[2]
That riche was, for which men hild him wys.

[1] In allusion to the derivation of the word *lollard* from *lolium*, (German *lolch,*) the word by which the original ζιζάνια, Matt. xiii. 25, is rendered in the Vulgate. The early English versions translate it *cockle*, and the parable was understood from the earliest times to refer to heresies.—Euseb. *Eccles. Hist.*, iv. 24. Du Cange, in v. *Lollardus*, supposes it to be a word of German original, signifying *mussitator*, a mumbler of prayers. The modern German word, however, is *lallen*, and means to stammer.—See also Kilian in v. Others think that the name was given to this sect by Walter Lolhard, who was put to death at Cologne in 1315, and whose dogmas were said to resemble those of Wickliffe. They spread so rapidly in England, that Knighton, a contemporary, declares, 'You could not meet two people in the way but one of them was a lollard.'

[2] A suburb of Paris where was situated the celebrated abbey of that name.

A wyf he had of excellent beaute,
And companable, and reverent was sche;
Which is a thing that causeth more despence,
Than worth is al the cher and reverence
That men doon hem at festes or at daunces.
Such salutaciouns and continaunces
Passeth,[1] as doth the schadow on a wal;
But wo is him that paye moot for al.
The sely housbond algat moste pay,
He most us[2] clothe in ful good array
Al for his oughne worschip richely;
In which array we daunce jolily.
And if that he may not, paraventure,
Or elles wil not such dispens endure,
But thynketh it is wasted and i-lost,
Than moot another paye for oure cost,
Or lene us gold, that is perilous.
This worthy marchaunt huld a noble hous,
For which he hadde alday gret repair
For his largesce, and for his wyf was fair.
What wonder is? but herkneth to my tale.
Amonges al these gestes gret and smale,
Ther was a monk, a fair man and a bold,
I trowe, thritty wynter he was old,
That ever in oon was drawyng to that place.
This yonge monk, that was so fair of face,
Aqueynted was so with the goode man,
Sith that her firste knowleche bygan,
That in his hous as familier was he
As it possibil is a frend to be.
And for as mochil as this goode man
And eek this monk, of which that I bygan,
Were bothe tuo i-born in oon village,
The monk him claymeth, as for cosynage;

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[1] *Passeth* is the old Saxon plural form of the present tense.

[2] Tyrwhitt supposes from this expression that the tale was originally intended to be recited by a woman; but this, from internal evidence, is scarcely credible, and it is quite in the style of Chaucer's playful humour to make the Schipman assume, for the nonce, the character of a gay wife.

And he ageín him saith nat oones nay,
But was as glad therof, as foul of day,[1]
For to his hert it was a gret plesaunce.
Thus ben thay knyt with eterne alliaunce,
And ilk of hem gan other to assure
Of brotherhed, whil that her lif may dure.
Fre was daun Johan,[2] and manly of despence
As in that hous, and ful of diligence
To do plesaunce, and also gret costage;
He nought forgat to geve the leste page
In al that hous; but, after her degre,
He gaf the lord, and siththen his meyne,
Whan that he com, som maner honest thing;
For which thay were as glad of his comyng
As foul is fayn, whan that the sonne upriseth.
No mor of this as now, for it suffiseth.

But so bifel, this marchaunt on a day
Schop him to make redy his array
Toward the toun of Bruges[3] for to fare,
To byen ther a porcioun of ware;
For which he hath to Paris sent anoon
A messenger, and prayed hath dan Johan

[1] As a bird is of the dawning of day.

[2] *Johan* is throughout pronounced *John*.

[3] Bruges, as Mr. Wright observes, was, in its palmy days, the centre of commerce in Western Europe. Its noble Hôtel de Ville, and lofty mansions, with their spacious *greniers* in the roof, answering the double purpose of the *entrepot* and the counting-house, as indicated in this tale, and its lower stories, the residence of the merchant and his family, still remain as memorials of its former greatness. Our modern manufacturing towns present a striking contrast to the beauty and splendour of the old. Steam power has supplanted hands and looms; the tall chimney and the unsightly factory have displaced the picturesque buildings which in former times housed both workers and employers; and the seats of industry have become exclusively the workshops of the operatives, while the opulent masters, glad to escape from the din and smoke, establish themselves in the healthier air of the suburbs. The change is, no doubt, one of the inevitable conditions of progress, and is productive of important material advantages; but it is not unattended by some drawbacks, of which the more marked separation of classes is, perhaps, the most to be regretted.

That he schuld come to Seint Denys, and play
With him, and with his wyf, a day or tway,
Er he to Brigges went, in alle wise.
This nobil monk, of which I yow devyse,
Hath of his abbot, as him list, licence,
(Bycause he was a man of heih prudence,
And eek an officer) out for to ryde,
To se her graunges and her bernes wyde;
And unto Seint Denys he cometh anoon.
Who was so welcome as my lord dan Johan,
Oure deere cosyn, ful of curtesie?
With him brought he a jubbe of malvesie,[1]
And eek another ful of wyn vernage,
And volantyn,[2] as ay was his usage;
And thus I lete him ete, and drynk, and play,
This marchaunt and his monk, a day or tway.
The thridde day this marchaunt up he riseth,
And on his needes sadly him avyseth;
And up into his countour hous goth he,
To rekyn with him self, as wel may be,
Of thilke yer, how that it with him stood,
And how that he dispended had his good,
And if that he encresced were or noon.
His bookes and his bagges many oon
He hath byforn him on his counter bord,
For riche was his tresor and his hord;
For which ful fast his countour dore he schette;
And eek he wolde no man schold him lette
Of his accomptes, for the mene tyme;
And thus he sat, til it was passed prime.
Dan Johan was risen in the morn also,
And in the gardyn walkith to and fro.

---

[1] Malvasia was a town upon the eastern coast of the Morea. See vol. ii. p. 180, note 1.

[2] Speght, Urry, and Tyrwhitt read *volatily*, or *volatile*, which means game, like the French *volaille*. Unless *volantyn* be a clerical error, it seems the name of some kind of wine. The nearest resemblance in sound of any known wine is that of the Valteline.

And hath his thinges said ful curteisly.[1]
This good wyf com walkyng ful prively
Into the gardyn, ther he walketh softe,
And him salueth, as sche hath doon ful ofte.
A mayde child com in hir compaignie,
Which as hir list sche may governe and gye,
For yit under the yerde[2] was the mayde.
'O dere cosyn myn, dan Johan,' sche sayde,
'What ayleth yow so rathe to arise?'
'Neçe,' quod he, 'it aught y-nough suffise
Fyve houres for to slepe upon a night;
But it were for eny old palled wight,
As ben these weddid men, that lye and dare,
As in a forme lith a wery hare,
Were al for-straught with houndes gret and smale.
But, dere nece, why be ye so pale?
I trowe certis, that oure goode man
Hath on yow laborid, sith the night bygan,
That yow were nede to resten hastiliche.'
And with that word he lowgh ful meriliche,
And of his owne thought he woxe[3] al reed.
This faire wyf bygan to schake hir heed,
And sayde thus, 'Ye, God wot al,' quod sche.
'Nay, cosyn myn, it stant not so with me.
For by that God, that gaf me soule and lif,
In al the reme of Fraunce is ther no wyf
That lasse lust hath to that sory play;
For I may synge allas and waylaway

---

[1] *His thinges*, means the divine office in the Breviary; *i. e.*, the psalms and lessons from Scripture, which, being absent from his convent, he was bound to say privately. Thus he afterwards has his *portos*, or breviary, ready to make an oath upon. *Curteisly*, as here applied, is one of those picturesque expressions in which Chaucer is so happy, and the whole force of which can hardly be explained. It seems to convey the idea of composure of countenance, and performance of all outward signs of reverence and recollection.

[2] *Sub ferula*, in a state of pupillage.

[3] *Woxe* has been substituted from Speght and Tyrwhitt for *was* the reading of the Harl. MS., as more expressive.

That I was born; but to no wight,' quod sche,
'Dar I not telle how it stont with me.
Wherfor I think out of this lond to wende,
Or elles of my self to make an ende,
So ful am I of drede and eek of care.'
This monk bygan upon this wyf to stare;
And sayd, 'Allas! my nece, God forbede,
That ye for eny sorw, or eny drede,
For-do your self; but telleth me your greef,
Paraventure I may in youre mescheef
Councel or help; and therfor telleth me
Al your annoy, for it schal be secre.
For on my portos[1] here I make an oth,
That never in my lif, for lief ne loth,
Ne schal I of no counseil you bywray.'
'The same agein,' quod sche, 'to yow I say.
By God and by this portos wil I swere,
Though men me wolde al in peces tere,
Ne schal I never, for to go to helle,
Bywreye word of thing that ye me telle,
Not for no cosynage, ne alliaunce,
But verrayly for love and affiaunce.'
Thus ben thay sworn, and herupon i-kist,
And ilk of hem told other what hem list.
'Cosyn,' quod sche, 'if that I had a space,
As I have noon, and namly in this place,

---

[1] The Portos, or Portiforium, was what is now called the Breviary, because containing, *in brief*, the psalms, lessons, and commentaries appointed for every day in the year. The word *portos* may be derived from *porter*, to carry, and *hose*, the lower garments, in which were the pockets, just as we call a portable edition a *pocket* edition. Thus, in Percy's ballad of *The King and the Miller of Mansfielde*, Dick, the miller's son, when invited to dine at court, complains—

'You fed us with swatling dishes so small;
Zounds! a black pudding is better than all.'

'Aye, marry,' quoth our king, 'that were a dainty thing,
Could a man get but one here for to eate.'
With that Dick strate arose, and *pluckt one from his hose*.

Then wold I telle a legend of my lyf,
What I have suffred sith I was a wyf
With myn housbond, though he be your cosyn.'
'Nay,' quod this monk, 'by God and seint Martyn!
He is no more cosyn unto me,
Than is this leef that hongeth on the tre;
I cleped him so, by seint Denis of Fraunce,
To have the more cause of acqueyntaunce
Of yow, which I have loved specially
Aboven alle wommen sikerly;
This swere I yow on my professioun.[1]
Tellith youre greef lest that he come adoun,
And hasteth yow; and goth your way anoon.'
'My deere love,' quod sche, 'O dan Johan!
Ful leef me were this counseil for to hyde,
But out it moot, I may no more abyde.
Myn housbond is to me the worste man,
That ever was sitthe the world bigan;
But sith I am a wif, it sit nought me
To telle no wight of oure privete,
Neyther a-bedde, ne in noon other place;
God schilde I scholde telle it for his grace!
A wyf ne schal not say of hir housbonde
But al honour, as I can understonde.
Save unto yow thus moche telle I schal;
As help me God, he is not worth at al,
In no degre, the valieu of a flie.
But yit me greveth most his nigardye.
And wel ye wot, that wymmen naturelly
Desiren sixe thinges, as wel as I.
They wolde that here housbondes scholde be
Hardy, and wys, and riche, and therto fre,
And buxom to his wyf, and freisch on bedde.
But by the Lord that for us alle bledde,

[1] This line is omitted in the Harl. MS., and is supplied from the Lansd. The monk swears by his profession of religion, of monachism.

For his honour my selven to array,
A sonday next comyng yit most I pay
An hundred frank, or elles I am lorn.
Yit were me lever that I were unborn,
Than me were doon a sclaunder or vilenye.
And if myn housbond eek might it espie,
I ner but lost; and therfor I yow pray[1]
Lene me this summe, or elles mot I dey.
Dan Johan, I seye, lene me this hundred frankes;
Parde I wil nought faile yow my thankes,
If that yow list to do that I yow pray.
For at a certein day I wol yow pay,
And do to yow what pleasaunce and servise
That I may do, right as you list devyse;
And but I do, God take on me vengeaunce,
As foul as hadde Geneloun of Fraunce!'[2]
This gentil monk answard in this manere;
'Now trewely, myn owne lady deere,
I have on yow so gret pite and reuthe,
That I yow swere, and plighte yow my treuthe,
Than whan your housbond is to Flaundres fare,
I schal deliver yow out of youre care,
For I wol bringe yow an hundred frankes.'
And with that word he caught hir by the schankes,

[1] This and the following three lines are omitted in the Harl. MS., probably a mistake occasioned by the repetition of the final word.

[2] Sir Guenelon, or Guines, has been handed down to posterity as the personification of perfidy. He was sent by Charlemagne on an embassy to Marsire and Baligand, two Saracenic kings residing at Saragossa, to require them either to embrace Christianity or pay tribute. Being bribed by the Moors with a present of thirty *somers*, or sumpter mules, laden with gold and silver, Guenelon on his return persuaded Charlemagne to lead the Christian army into the defiles of Roncesvalles. Charles himself, with the van, was allowed to pass unmolested; when the Moors set upon the second division among the rocks and thickets, and defeated it with great slaughter. Roland, who commanded it, was separated from his followers, and wandering in the forest beset by his enemies, he wound his horn in hopes of bringing his companions to his assistance; but Guenelon persuaded Charlemagne that he was only amusing himself in hunting, and thus the flower of Christian chivalry was suffered to perish.—See the romance of *Sir Otriel*, in Ellis's *Specimens*.

And hir embraced hard, and kist hir ofte.
'Goth now your way,' quod he, 'al stille and softe,
And let us dyne[1] as sone as ye may,
For by my chilindre[2] it is prime of day;
Goth now, and beth as trew as I schal be.'
'Now elles God forbede, sire!' quod sche.
And forth sche goth, as joly as a pye,
And bad the cookes that thai schold hem hye,
So that men myghte dyne, and that anoon.
Up to hir housbond this wif is y-goon,
And knokketh at his dore boldely.
'*Quy est la?*' quod he. 'Peter! it am I,'
Quod sche. 'How longe, sire, wol ye fast?
How longe tyme wol ye reken and cast
Your sommes, and your bokes, and your thinges?
The devel have part of alle such rekenynges.
Ye have i-nough pardy of Goddes sonde.
Com doun to day, and let your bagges stonde.
Ne be ye not aschamed, that daun Johan
Schal alday fastyng thus elenge goon?
What? let us hiere masse,[3] and gowe dyne.'
'Wif,' quod this man, 'litel canstow divine
The curious besynesse that we have;
For of us chapmen, al so God me save,
And by that lord that cleped is seint Ive,[4]
Scarsly amonges twelve, two schuln thrive
Continuelly, lastyng into her age.
We may wel make cheer and good visage,
And dryve forth the world, as it may be,
And kepen our estat in privete,

[1] See vol. ii. p. 132, note 3.

[2] Speght and Tyrwhitt read *kalender*, and the oath would then mean, 'I swear by all the saints in the kalendar.' Mr. Wright does not explain the meaning of *chilindre*. Perhaps it was an evasive way of pronouncing kalendar, just as the mincing fops in the comedies are made to say 'Egad,' to avoid using the real word implied.

[3] The early Christians used to celebrate the Holy Eucharist every morning, as intimated in the well-known letter of Pliny to Trajan, a custom which, it appears from this passage, was still observed in the middle ages.

[4] See vol. ii. p. 112, note 4.

Til we be deed, or elles that we play
A pilgrimage,[1] or goon out of the way.
And therfor have I gret necessite
Upon this queynte world to avyse me.
For evermor we moste stond in drede
Of hap and fortun in our chapmanhede.
To Flaundres wil I go to morw at day,
And come agayn as soone as I may;
For which, my deere wif, I the byseeke
As be to every wight buxom and meeke,
And for to kepe oure good be curious,
And honestly governe wel our hous.
Thou hast y-nough, in every maner wise,
That to a thrifty housbond[2] may suffise.
The lakketh noon array, ne no vitaile;
Of silver in thy purs thou mayst not faile.'
And with that word his countour dore he schitte,
And doun he goth; no lenger wold he lette;
And hastily a masse was ther sayd,
And spedily the tables were i-layd,
And to the dyner faste thay hem spedde,
And rychely this chapman the monk fedde.
And after dyner daun Johan sobrely
This chapman took on part, and prively
Sayd him thus: 'Cosyn, it stondeth so,
That, wel I se, to Brigges wol ye go;

[1] This appears to intimate that a pilgrimage was sometimes undertaken by ruined men, as a pretext to get out of the way of creditors. Thus, in the *Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode*:—

'Now and thou lese thy londe, sayd Robyn,
What shall fall of the?
Hastely I will me buske, sayd the knyght,
Over the salte see,
And se where Cryst was quycke and deed
On the Mount of Caluarie.'—*Fytte* i., v. 225.

[2] Tyrwhitt reads *household*, but the reading in the text is better. Husband means properly economist, and in this sense is applied indifferently to men and women. The merchant means to say, 'You have sufficient to meet your wants if you are a thrifty economist.' Good husbandry is still used in the sense of economy, and to husband one's resources means to economize them.

God and seint Austyn spede you and gyde.
I pray yow, cosyn, wisly that ye ryde;
Governeth yow also of your diete
Al temperelly, and namely in this hete.
Bitwix us tuo nedeth no straunge fare;
Far wel, cosyn, God schilde you fro care.
If eny thing ther be by day or night,
If it lay in my power and my might,
That ye wil me comaunde in eny wise,
It schal be doon, right as ye wol devyse.
O thing er that ye goon, if it might be,
I wolde pray yow for to lene me
An hundred frankes for a wyke or tweye,
For certain bestis that I moste beye,
To store with a place that is oures;[1]
(God help me so, I wolde it were youres!)
I schal not faile seurly of my day,
Not for a thousand frankes, a myle way.
But let this thing be secre, I yow pray;
For for the bestis this night most I pay.
And fare now wel, myn owne cosyn deere;
Graunt mercy of your cost and of your cheere.'
This noble merchaunt gentilly anoon
Answerd and sayde: 'O cosyn daun Johan,
Now sikerly this is a smal request;
My gold is youres, whanne that yow lest,
And nought oonly my gold, but my chaffare;
Tak what yow liste, God schilde that ye spare![2]
But oon thing is, ye know it wel y-nough
Of chapmen, that her money is here plough.
We may creaunce whils we have a name,
But goldles for to be it is no game.

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[1] The monks have always been remarkable for their skill in farming. Indeed, manual labour for several hours in the day was part of the rule of St. Benedict. The high-born and polished St. Bernard used to work, like the lowest of the brethren, till he was ready to faint. See vol. i. p. 85, note 4.

[2] God *forbid* that you should spare.

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Pay it agayn, whan it lith in your ese;
After my might ful fayn wold I yow plese.'
This hundred frankes he set forth anoon,
And prively be took hem to daun Johan;
No wight in al this world wist of this loone,
Savyng this marchaund, and daun Johan alloone.
Thay drynke, and speke, and rome a while and play,
Til that dan Johan rydeth to his abbay.
The morwe cam, and forth this marchaund rideth
To Flaundres-ward, his prentis wel him gydeth,
Til that he cam to Brigges merily.
Now goth this marchaund faste and busily
Aboute his neede, and bieth, and creaunceth;
He neither pleyeth atte dys, ne daunceth;
But as a marchaund, schortly for to telle,
He lad his lyf, and ther I let him dwelle.
The sonday next the marchaund was agoon,
To Seint Denys i-come is daun Johan,
With croune[1] and berd al freisch and newe i-schave.
In al the hous ther nas so litel a knave,
Ne no wight elles, that he nas ful fayn,
For that my lord dan Johan was come agayn.
And schortly to the poynte for to gon,
This faire wif acordith with dan Johan,
That for these hundred frank he schuld al night
Have hir in his armes bolt upright;
And this acord parformed was in dede.
In mirth al night a bisy lif thay lede
Til it was day, than dan Johan went his way,
And bad the meigne far wel, have good day.

[1] It is perhaps unnecessary to remind the reader that all clerks used to shave the crown of the head, a remnant of which custom may be observed in the form of the wigs of our judges, who, in the middle ages, were generally clerks. This tonsure on the crown of his wig, the judge, in passing sentence of death, covers with a black cap, not to give additional solemnity to the occasion, as some suppose, but to show that for the time he lays aside his clerical office, it being against the primitive canons for a churchman to have anything to do with the death of a fellow-creature.

For noon of hem, ne no wight in the toun,
Hath of dan Johan noon suspeccioun;
And forth he rideth hom to his abbay,
Or wher him list, no more of him I[1] say.
This marchaund, whan that ended was the faire,
To Seynt Denys he gan for to repeire,
And with his wif he maketh fest and cheere,
And tellith hir that chaffar is so deere,
That needes most he make a chevisaunce,
For he was bounde in a reconisaunce,
To paye twenty thousand scheldes anoon.
For which this marchaund is to Paris goon,
To borwe of certeyn frendes that he hadde
A certein frankes, and some with him he ladde.
And whan that he was come into the toun,
For gret chiertee and gret affeccioun,
Unto dan Johan he first goth him to play;
Nought for to borwe of him no kyn monay,
But for to wite and se of his welfare,
And for to telle him of his chaffare,
As frendes doon, whan thay ben met in fere.
Dan Johan him maketh fest and mery cheere;
And he him told agayn ful specially,
How he had bought right wel and graciously
(Thanked be God!) al hole his marchaundise;
Save that he most in alle manere wise
Maken a chevyssauns, as for his best;
And than he schulde be in joye and rest.
Dan Johan answerde, 'Certis I am fayn,
That ye in hele are comen hom agayn;
And if that I were riche, as have I blisse,
Of twenty thousand scheld schuld ye not mysse,
For ye so kyndely this other day
Lente me gold; and as I can and may
I thanke yow, by God and by seint Jame.
But natheles I took it to oure dame,

[1] The Harl. MS., evidently by mistake, omits the *I*.

Youre wif at home, the same gold agein
Upon your bench, sche wot it wel certeyn,
By certein toknes that I can hir telle.
Now by your leve, I may no lenger duelle;
Oure abbot wol out of this toun anoon,
And in his compaignye moot I goon.
Grete wel oure dame, myn owen nece swete,
And far wel, dere cosyn, til that we meete.'
This marchaund, which that was bothe war and wys,
Creaunced hath, and payed eek in Parys
To certeyn Lombardes[1] redy in hir hond
This somme of gold, and took of hem his bond,[2]
And hom he goth, as merry as a popinjay.
For wel he knew he stood in such array,
That needes most he wynne in that viage
A thousand frankes, above al his costage.
His wyf ful redy mette him at the gate,
As sche was wont of old usage algate;
And al that night in mirthe thay ben sette,
For he was riche, and clerly out of debt.
Whan it was day, this marchaund gan embrace
His wyf al newe, and kist hir on hir face,
And up he goth, and maketh it ful tough.
'No more,' quod sche, 'by God, ye have y-nough;'
And wantouuly with him sche lay and playde,
Till atte laste thus this marchaund sayde:—
'By God,' quod he, 'I am a litel wroth
With yow, my wyf, although it be me loth;
And wite ye why? by God, as that I gesse,
Ye han i-maad a maner straungenesse
Bitwixe me and my cosyn dan Johan.
Ye schold have warned me, er I had goon,

[1] The Lombard merchants were the great money-lenders and bankers of the middle ages; hence the three golden balls, the arms of Lombardy, are the sign of a money-lender's office; hence also the name of Lombard-street, where the merchants used to meet.

[2] The Harl. MS. reads *hond*, which makes the passage unintelligible. The reading in the text is from Speght and Tyrwhitt, and means, 'He received back the bond which he had given for the payment of the money.'

That he yow had an hundred frankes payd
By redy tokne; and huld him evil appayd
For that I to him spak of chevysaunce,
(Me semed so as by his countenaunce);
But natheles, by God of heven king!
I thoughte nought to axe him no thing.
I pray the, wyf, do thou no more so.
Tel me alway, er that I fro the go,
If eny dettour hath in myn absence
I-payed the, lest in thy necgligence
I may him axe a thing that he hath payed.'
This wyf was not affered ne affrayed,
But boldely sche sayde, and that anoon:
'Mary! I diffy that false monk, dan Johan!
I kepe not of his tokenes never a del;
He took me a certeyn gold, that wot I wel.
What? evel thedom on his monkes snowte!
For, God it wot! I wende withoute doute,
That he had geve it me, bycause of yow,
To do therwith myn honour and my prow,
For cosynage, and eek for *bele cheer*
That he hath had ful ofte tyme heer.
But synnes that I stonde in this disjoynt,
I wol answer yow schortly to the poynt.
Ye han mo slakke dettours than am I;
For I wol pay yow wel and redily.
Fro day to day, and if so be I faile,
I am your wif, score it upon my taile,
And I schal paye it as soone as I may.
For by my trouthe, I have on myn array,
And nought on wast, bistowed it every del.
And for I have bistowed it so wel
For youre honour, for Goddes sake I say,
As beth nought wroth, but let us laugh and play;
Ye schul my joly body have to wedde;[1]
By God, I wol not pay yow but on bedde;

[1] In pledge; but perhaps there is a further allusion.

Forgeve it me, myn owne spouse deere;
Turne hider-ward and make better cheere.'
This marchaund saugh noon other remedy;
And for to chide, it nas but foly,
Sith that the thing may not amendid be.
'Now, wif,' he sayde, 'and I forgive it the;
And by thi lif, ne be no more so large;
Keep better my good, this give I the in charge.'
Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende
Talyng y-nough, unto our lyves ende!'

THE PRIORESSES PROLOGE.

'WEL sayd, by corpus boones!' quod oure Host,
'Now longe mot thou sayle by the cost,
Sir gentil maister, gentil mariner!
God give the monk a thousand last[1] quade yer,
Haha! felaws, be war for such a jape.
The monk put in the mannes hood an ape,
And in his wyves eek, by seint Austyn.
Draweth no monkes more unto your in.
But now pas over, and let us loke aboute,
Who schal now telle first of al this route
Another tale;' and with that word he sayde,
As curteisly as it had ben a mayde,
'My lady Prioresse, by your leve,
So that I wist I scholde yow not greve,
I wolde deme, that ye telle scholde
A tale next, if so were that ye wolde.
Now wol ye vouche sauf, my lady deere?'
'Gladly,' quod sche, and sayd in this manere.

[1] *Last*, a German word, signifying *burden*, is still used on the coast of East Anglia for the measure by which herrings are counted, and means ten thousand. *Quead* is Anglo-Saxon for *bad*. The Host, therefore, says, 'May God send the monk a thousand times ten thousand bad years.' The transition from his boisterous comment on the *Schipmannes Tale* to the softness and gallantry of his address to the Prioresse is admirably managed.

THE PRIORESSES TALE.

[This beautiful legend has been modernized by Wordsworth, with a closer adherence to the text than has been attained in any similar instance. The story is one of many, circulated probably as a pretext for plundering the Jews; but whether intended for this purpose or not, these legends appear to have produced the effect. For, in the fortieth year of Henry III., *i.e.*, 1256, a commission was held for the trial of some Jews, accused of the murder of a child at Lincoln; and in the same year a warrant was issued for the sale of the goods of those who had been executed for it. This is probably the Hugh of Lincoln mentioned at the end of this tale, the scene of which is laid in Asia, indicating, as Tyrwhitt observes, that it was the original of the numerous martyrdoms of the same class mentioned in the *Acta Sanctorum* of Bolandus, among which is that of 'Willielmus Norvicensis,' said to have suffered on the 10th of March, 1144. In *Percy's Relics* is a ballad on the same subject, entitled *The Jewes Doughter*. But those who wish to investigate this curious tradition will find everything relating to it collected in M. Francisque Michel's *Hugues de Lincoln, Recueil de Ballades Anglo-Normandes et Ecossoisses relatives au Meurtre de cet Enfant*. Paris, 1834. A legend of a similar kind is preserved amongst the traditions of the Rhine. The tale, which illustrates several curious mediæval customs, is peculiarly characteristic of the Prioresse, and is related with Chaucer's usual elegance, simplicity, and pathos.]

O LORD, oure Lord, thy name how merveylous
Is in this large world i-sprad! (quod sche)
For nought oonly thy laude precious
Parformed is by men of heih degre,
But by mouthes of children thy bounte
Parformed is; on oure brest soukynge
Som tyme schewe thay thin heriynge.[1]

[1] The Prioresse begins her tale with the first verse of Psalm viii.

Wherfore in laude, as I best can or may,
Of the and of thy white lily flour,
Which that the bar, and is a mayde alway,
To telle a story I wil do my labour;
Nought that I may encrescse youre honour,
For sche hir silf is honour and roote
Of bounte, next hir Sone, and soules boote.
O moodir mayde, o mayde mooder fre!
O bussh unbrent, brennyng in Moises sight,[1]
That ravysshedest doun fro the deite,
Thurgh thin humblesse, the gost that in the alight;[2]
Of whos vertu, he in thin herte pight,
Conceyved was the Fadres sapience;[3]
Help me to telle it in thy reverence.
Lady, thi bounte, and thy magnificence,
Thy vertu and thi gret humilite,
Ther may no tonge expres in no science;
For som tyme, lady, er men pray to the,[4]
Thow gost biforn of thy benignite,
And getist us the light, thurgh thy prayere,
To gyden us the way to thy Son so deere.
My connyng is so weyk, o blisful queene,
For to declare thy grete worthinesse,
That I may not this in my wyt susteene;
But as a child of twelf month old or lesse,
That can unnethes eny word expresse,
Right so fare I, and therfor I you pray,
Gydeth[5] my song, that I schal of yow say.
Ther was in Acy,[6] in a greet citee,
Amonges Cristen folk a Jewerye,[7]
Susteyned by a lord of that contre,

[1] The burning bush in which the Angel of the Lord, supposed by St. Austin and all subsequent theologians to have been the second person of the ever-blessed Trinity, appeared to Moses, was believed to be a type of the blessed Virgin. [2] Luke i. 35.

[3] The meaning is, 'By the power of Him who was placed in thy heart, the Wisdom of the Father was conceived.'

[4] See *ante*, p. 8, note 3. [5] The Harl. MS. reads *Endeth*.

[6] Asia, meaning probably Asia Minor, as in the Acts of the Apostles.

[7] In mediæval towns there was always a quarter assigned to the

For foul usure, and lucre of felonye,
Hateful to Crist, and to his compaignye;
And thurgh the strete men might ride and wende,
For it was fre, and open at everich ende.
A litel scole of Cristen folk ther stood
Doun at the forther end, in which ther were
Children an heep y-comen of Cristen blood,
That lered in that scole, yer by yere,
Such maner doctrine as men used there;
This is to say, to synge[1] and to rede,
As smale childer doon in her childhede.
Among these children was a widow sone,
A litel clergeoun,[2] that seven yer was of age,
That day by day to scole was his wone;
And eek also, wherso he saugh thymage
Of Cristes moder, had he in usage,
As him was taught, to knele adoun, and say
His *Ave Maria*, as he goth by the way.

Jews, called 'the Jewry,' and separated from the rest of the city by gates, which were shut every night. There is to this day in Rome a Jewry, over the gate of which is placed a figure of our Lord on the cross, with the text from Isaiah quoted by St. Paul, Rom. x. 21, and by him applied to the unbelieving Jews, 'All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.' Thus Warton, *Hist. Engl. Poetry*, sect. xvii., tells us that Averroes, having been accused of heretical opinions, was sentenced to live with *the Jews in the street of the Jews* in Cordova. One of the streets in the city of London is still called by this name. In Frankfort, and other towns on the Continent, the Jews' quarter yet retains its distinctive title.

[1] Music formed a large part of education during the middle ages, as it does now in Germany. It has been found by those who have the superintendence of the education of the poor in late years, that it is almost the only means of awakening their imaginations, and rousing to exertion their minds, brutalized by privation and ignorance. Most persons will recollect the well-known statute of All Souls, which requires that the fellows shall be *mediocriter docti in plano cantu*.

[2] This means, apparently, that the child, like Samuel, was devoted from his infancy to the priesthood. It was very usual for the religious orders to educate promising children, gratis, from their earliest years, in hopes that they would become ornaments of their order. Thus Erasmus was brought up by the Franciscans, and incurred their deep resentment by preferring the secular priesthood when he came to years of discretion. Thus also Jacke Upland asks the friar, 'Why steal ye men's children for to make hem of your sect?'

Thus hath this widow her litel child i-taught
Oure blisful lady, Cristes moder deere,
To worschip ay, and he forgat it nought;
For cely child wil alway soone leere.
But ay whan I remembre of this matiere,
Seint Nicholas[1] stont ever in my presence,
For he so yong to Crist dede reverence.

This litel child, his litel book lernynge,
As he sat in the scole in his primere,
He *O alma redemptoris*[2] herde synge,
As children lerned her antiphonere;
And as he durst, he drough him ner and neere,
And herkned ever the wordes and the note,
Til he the firste vers couthe al by rote.

Nought wist he what his Latyn was to say,
For he so yong and tender was of age;
But on a day his felaw gan he pray
To expoune him the song in his langage,
Or telle him what this song was in usage;
This prayd he him to construe and declare,
Ful often tyme upon his knees bare.

His felaw, which that elder was than he,
Answerd him thus: 'This song, I have herd seye,
Was maked of our blisful lady fre,

---

[1] This is an allusion to the story told in the lesson for this saint's anniversary in the *Roman Breviary*, quoted by Tyrwhitt:—'Cujus viri sanctitas, quanta futura esset, jam ab incunabulis apparuit. Nam infans, cum reliquos dies lac nutricis frequens sugeret, quarta et sexta feria (on Wednesdays and Fridays) semel duntaxat, idque vesperi sugebat.'

[2] This antiphon is here given in full for the benefit of those who are curious in such matters. It is to be found in the Antiphonarium of the diocese of Dijon, and probably in that of Salisbury, and is appointed to be sung from Advent to the Purification. Hence the little clergion says he will conne it all 'ere Cristemasse be went.'

'Alma Redemptoris mater, quæ pervia cœli
Porta manes, et stella maris, succurre cadenti,
Surgere qui curat, populo; tu quæ genuisti,
Naturâ mirante, tuum sanctum Genitorem,
Virgo priùs ac posteriùs; Gabrielis ab ore
Sumens illud Ave, peccatorum miserere.'

Hire to saluen, and eek hire to preye
To ben our help and socour whan we deye.
I can no more expoune in this matere;
I lerne song, I can no more gramer.'
'And is this song i-maad in reverence
Of Cristes moder?' sayde this innocent;
'Now certes I wol do my diligence
To conne it al, er Cristemasse be went;
Though that I for my primer schal be schent,
And schal be betyn thries in an hour,
I wol it conne, our lady to honoure.'
His felaw taught him hom-ward prively
From day to day, til he coude it by rote,
And than he song it wel and boldely;
Twyes on the day it passed thurgh his throte,
From word to word accordyng with the note,
To scole-ward and hom-ward whan he went;
On Cristes moder was set al his entent.
As I have sayd, thurghout the Jewrye
This litel child as he cam to and fro,
Ful merily than wold he synge and crie,
O alma redemptoris, evermo;
The swetnes hath his herte persed so
Of Cristes moder, that to hir to pray
He can not stynt of syngyng by the way.
Oure firste foo, the serpent Sathanas,
That hath in Jewes hert his waspis nest,
Upswal and sayde: 'O Ebreik peple, allas!
Is this a thing to yow that is honest,
That such a boy schal walken as him lest
In youre despyt, and synge of such sentence,
Which is agens your lawes reverence?'
Fro thennesforth the Jewes han conspired
This innocent out of this world to enchace;
An homicide therto han thay hired.
That in an aley had a prive place;
And as the childe gan forthby to pace,

This false Jewe him hent, and huld ful faste,
And kut his throte, and in a put him caste.[1]
I say in a wardrobe thay him threw,
Wher as the Jewes purgen her entraile.
O cursed folk! O Herodes al newe!
What may your evyl entente you availe?
Morther wol out, certeyn it wil nought faile,
And namly ther thonour of God schuld sprede;
The blood out crieth on your cursed dede.
O martir sondit[2] to virginite,
Now maystow synge, folwyng ever in oon
The white lomb celestial, quod sche,
Of which the grete evaungelist seint Johan[3]
In Pathmos wroot, which seith that thay that goon
Bifore the lamb, and synge a song al newe,
That never fleischly wommen thay ne knewe.
This pore widowe wayteth al this night,
After this litel child, but he cometh nought;
For which as soone as it was dayes light,
With face pale, in drede and busy thought,
Sche hath at scole and elles wher him sought;
Til fynally sche gan of hem aspye,
That he was last seyn in the Jewerie.
With moodres pite in hir brest enclosed,
Sche goth, as sche were half out of hir mynde,
To every place, wher sche hath supposed
By liklihede hir child for to fynde;
And ever on Cristes mooder meke and kynde
Sche cried, and atte laste thus sche wrought,
Among the cursed Jewes sche him sought.
Sche freyned, and sche prayed pitously
To every Jew that dwelled in that place,
To telle hir, if hir child wente ther by;

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[1] This is the reading of the Lansd. MS. The Harl. MS. reads *and threw him in atte laste*.—W.

[2] Tyrwhitt reads *soudé*, which he derives from the French *soudé*, joined. Mr. Wright does not explain *sondit*, which is indeed quite unintelligible.

[3] Rev. xiv. 4.

Thay sayden nay; but Jhesu of his grace
Gaf in hir thought, withinne a litel space,
That in that place after hir sone sche cryde,
Wher as he was cast in a put bysyde.
O grete God, that parformedist thin laude
By mouth of innocentz, lo, here thy might!
This gemme of chastite, this emeraude,
And eek of martirdom the ruby bright!
Ther he with throte y-corve[1] lay upright,
He *Alma redemptoris* gan to synge
So lowde, that al the place bigan to rynge.
The Cristen folk, that thurgh the strete went,
In comen, for to wonder upon this thing;
And hastily for the provost thay sent.
He cam anoon, withoute tarying,
And heriede Crist, that is of heven King,
And eek his moder, honour of mankynde,
And after that the Jewes let he bynde.
This child with pitous lamentacioun
Up taken was, syngyng his song alway;
And with honour of gret processioun,
Thay caried him unto the next abbay.
His modir swownyng by the beere lay;
Unnethe might the poeple that was there
This newe Rachel bringe fro the beere.[2]
With torment and with schamful deth echon
This provost doth these Jewes for to sterve,
That of this moerder wist, and that anoon;
He wolde no such cursednesse observe;
Evel schal have, that evyl wol deserve.
Therfore with wilde hors he dede hem drawe,
And after that he heng hem by the lawe.
Upon his beere ay lith the innocent
Biforn the chief auter whiles the masse last;
And after that, thabbot with his covent

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *i-kut*, which spoils the metre. The Lansd. MS. has been followed in the text. [2] Matt. ii. 18.

Han sped hem for to burie him ful fast;
And whan thay halywater on him cast,
Yet spak this child, whan spreynde was the water,
And song *O alma redemptoris mater.*
This abbot, which that was an holy man,
As monkes ben, or elles oughte be,
This yonge child to conjure he bigan,
And sayd: 'O deere child, I halse the,
In vertu of the holy Trinite,
Tel me what is thy cause for to synge,
Sith that thy throte is kit at my semynge.'
'My throte is kit unto my nekke-boon,'
Sayde this child, and as by way of kynde
I schulde han ben deed long tyme agoon;
But Jhesu Crist, as ye in bookes fynde,
Wol that his glorie laste and be in mynde;
And for the worschip of his moder deere,
Yet may I synge *O alma* lowde and cleere.
'This welle of mercy, Cristes moder swete,
I loved alway, as after my connynge;
And whan that I my lyf schulde leete,
To me sche cam, and bad me for to synge
This antym verraily in my deyinge,
As ye have herd; and, whan that I had songe,
Me thought sche layde a grayn under my tonge.
'Wherfor I synge, and synge moot certeyne
In honour of that blisful mayden fre,
Til fro my tonge taken is the greyne.
And after that thus saide sche to me:
'My litil child, now wil I fecche the,
Whan that the grayn is fro thi tonge i-take;
Be nought agast, I wol the not forsake.'
This holy monk, this abbot him mene I,
His tonge out caught, and took awey the greyn;
And he gaf up the gost ful softely.
And whan the abbot hath this wonder seyn,
His salte teres striken doun as reyn;

And gruf he fel adoun unto the grounde,
And stille he lay, as he had ben y-bounde.
The covent eek lay on the pavyment
Wepyng and herying Cristes moder deere.
And after that thay rise, and forth thay went,
And took away this martir fro his beere,
And in a tombe of marble stoones cleere
Enclosed thay this litil body sweete;
Ther he is now, God lene us for to meete!
O yonge Hughe of Lyncoln;[1] slayn also
With cursed Jewes (as it is notable,
For it nys but a litel while ago),
Pray eek for us, we synful folk unstable,
That of his mercy God so merciable
On us his grete mercy multiplie,
For reverence of his modir Marie.

PROLOGE TO SIRE THOPAS.

WHAN sayd was this miracle, every man
As sober was, that wonder was to se,
Til that oure Host to jape he bigan,
And than at erst he loked upon me,
And sayde thus: 'What man art thou?' quod he.
'Thou lokest as thou woldest fynde an hare,
For ever upon the ground I se the stare.
'Approche ner, and loke merily.
Now ware you, sires, and let this man have space.
He in the wast is schape as wel as I;
This were a popet in an arm to embrace
For any womman, smal and fair of face.
He semeth elvisch[2] by his countenaunce,
For vnto no wight doth he daliaunce.

[1] See Introduction to this tale.

[2] This description of Chaucer's appearance and bearing is confirmed by Occleve's portrait, which represents him as rather below the middle

'Say now som what, sins other folk han said;
Telle us a tale and that of mirthe anoon.'
'Host,' quod I, 'ne beth nought evel apayd,
For other tale certes can I noon,
But of a rym I lerned yore agoon.'
'Ye, that is good,' quod he, 'now schul we heere
Som deynte thing, me thinketh by thy cheere.'

THE TALE OF SIR THOPAS.

[THIS tale is a burlesque upon the popular metrical romances of chivalry, and was evidently intended to ridicule their pompous descriptions of unimportant circumstances and impossible incidents. It has been asserted by Dr. Hurd (*Letters on Chivalry and Romance*), 'that *The Boke of the Gyant Olyphant and Chylde Thopas* was not a fiction of his (Chaucer's) own, but a story of antique fame;' upon which Tyrwhitt observes, 'I can only say that I have not been so fortunate as to meet with any traces of such a story of an earlier date than *The Canterbury Tales*;' and Ritson characteristically pronounces the assertion to be 'a lye.' See Warton, *Hist. Engl. Poetry*, § 16. Mr. Wright thinks that the antiquity of the story is somewhat favoured by the irregular terminations of different MSS., which look 'as though different scribes omitted some, or added as from a poem which they had in memory.' It is not very probable, however, that Chaucer could have found a romance ready-made so essentially calculated to throw discredit on the whole class. Sir Thopas appears to be the *beau idéal* of a knight; he does everything which a knight should do according to the most approved plan. Even the forest through which he rides is a 'model' forest, in which the most incongruous species of birds sport and sing; and nutmegs, cloves, and cinnamon grow

size, but inclined to corpulence (upon which the Host twits him ironically), with small features, a thoughtful look, and eyes fixed on the ground. This smallness of feature, and absence or reserve of manner, seem to be described by the word *elvisch*.

spontaneously. The knight himself, as in duty bound, falls 'on love-longing;' but, no earthly beauty being worthy of him, he must love an 'elf-queen.' Then comes the meeting with the giant, the challenge, the arming of the knight, which is described even to the putting on of his shirt and breeches, all conducted, according to rule, to the sound of music and the recitation of 'Romances that ben reales.' His disdain, after the example of Sir Perceval, of the luxury of bed, and his repose under the canopy of heaven, with his helmet for a pillow, and water from the well for his drink, while his horse feeds beside him 'on herbes fine,' are all indispensable to his character. In short, Sir Thopas is the prototype of Don Quixote.

The introduction of this satire is managed with admirable tact. Had the poet attempted to make his own tale characteristic, it ought to have been the best of all; but then he would have been obliged to award himself the prize of the supper. He ingeniously avoids this difficulty by reciting the 'rhyme doggerel of Sir Thopas,' as 'the best he can;' an arrangement which enables him to vary the tone of laudation with which the tales are generally received by the Host, and at the same time to ridicule the false taste and barren puerilities with which the metrical romance was beginning to be disfigured.]

LESTENETH, lordyngs, in good entent,
And I wol telle verrayment
Of myrthe and solas,
Al of a knyght was fair and gent
In batail and in tornament,
His name was Sir Thopas.
I-bore he was in fer contre,
In Flaundres, al byyonde the se,
At Poperyng[1] in the place;

[1] Poppering or Poppeling was the name of a parish in the marshes of Calais. Our famous antiquary, Leland, was once rector of it. *Bib. Brit.* in v. Leland.—T.

His fader was a man ful fre,
And lord he was of that contre,
  As it was Goddes grace.
Sir Thopas wax a doughty swayn;
Whyt was his face as payndemayn,[1]
  His lippes reed as rose;
His rode is lik scarlet en grayn,
And I yow telle, in good certayn
  He had a semly nose.
His heer, his berd, was lik safroun,
That to his girdil raught adoun;
  His schoon of cordewane;
Of Brigges were his hosen broun;
His robe was of sicladoun,[2]
  That coste many a jane.
He couthe hunt at wilde deer,
And ride on haukyng for ryver[3]
  With gray goshauk on honde;
Therto he was a good archeer,
Of wrastelyng was noon his peer,
  Ther eny ram[4] schal stonde.

[1] That this must have been a sort of remarkably white bread is clear enough. Skinner derives it from *panis matutinus, pain de matin;* and, indeed, Du Cange mentions a species of loaves or rolls called *matinelli.* However, I am more inclined to believe that it received its denomination from the province of Maine, where it was perhaps made in the greatest perfection.—T.

[2] Tyrwhitt supposes that *ciclaton* signified originally a circular robe of state, from the latinized Greek word *cyclas,* and that it afterwards came to mean the cloth of gold of which such robes were made. The word is Arabic, and was applied to a kind of stuff; which, being brought from the East, is here, as Mr. Wright observes, appropriately said to 'coste many a *jane,*' *i. e.,* coin of Genoa, one of the ports at which the Eastern trade was carried on.

[3] See vol. ii. p. 75, note 2. The goshawk was the largest and most courageous of the short-winged hawks used in falconry. A picturesque description of it will be found in the *Assembly of Foules.*

[4] See vol. i. p. 100, note 2. A ram or he-goat appears to have been the prize at rustic contests from the earliest times. To such pastoral games Horace traces the origin of the Greek tragedy, and derives the name itself from the prize, as if it were ἡ τράγου ᾠδή, the song of the goat.

'Carmine qui tragico vilem certavit ob hircum.'

HOR. *de Arte Poeticâ,* 220.

Ful many mayde bright in bour
Thay mourne for him, *par amour*,
Whan hem were bet te slepe:
But he was chast and no lecchour,
And sweet as is the brembre flour
That bereth the reede heepe.
And so it fel upon a day,
For soth as I yow telle may,
Sir Thopas wold out ryde;
He worth upon his steede gray,
And in his hond a launcegay,
A long sword by his syde.
He priketh thurgh a fair forest,
Therin is many a wilde best,
Ye, bothe buk and hare;
And as he priked north and est,
I tel it yow, hym had almest
Bityd a sory care.
Ther springen herbes greet and smale,
The licorys and the cetewale,
And many a clow gilofre,
And notemuge[1] to put in ale,
Whethir it be moist or stale,
Or for to lay in cofre.
The briddes synge, it is no nay,
The sperhauk and the popinjay,

---

[1] The best illustration of this, as Tyrwhitt remarks, is the description of the garden in the *Roman de la Rose*:—

'And trees there were great foison,
That baren nuts in her seson,
Such as men nutmegs call,
* * * * *
There was eke wexing many a spice,
As clowe gilofre and licorice,
Ginger and grein de Paris,
Cancll and setewale of pris.
And many a spice delitable
To eten when men rise fro table.'

It seems a sort of burlesque to represent the sparrow-hawk and popinjay as singing; and yet it occurs in Chaucer's favourite *Roman de la Rose*.

That joye it was to heere;
The throstilcock maad eek his lay,
The woode dowve upon the spray
Sche[1] song ful lowde and cleere.
Sir Thopas fel in love-longing,
Whan that he herde the briddes synge,
And priked as he were wood;
His faire steede in his prikynge
So swette, that men might him wrynge,
His sydes were al blood.
Sir Thopas eek so wery was
For priking on the softe gras,
So feers was his corrage,
That doun he layd him in that place
To make his steede som solace,
And gaf him good forage.
'O, seinte Mary, *benedicite*,
What eylith this love at me
To bynde me so sore?
Me dremed al this night, parde,
An elf queen[2] schal my lemman be,
And slepe under my gore.
An elf queen wol I have, I wis,
For in this world no womman is
Worthy to be my make
In toune;
Alle othir wommen I forsake,
And to an elf queen I me take
By dale and eek by doune.'
Into his sadil he clomb anoon,
And priked over stile and stoon
An elf queen for to spye;
Til he so longe hath ryden and goon,
That he fond in a prive woon
The contre of fairye,

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *so* for *sche*. It was probably intended for *scho*, from the Anglo-Saxon *seo*.

[2] See vol. ii. p. 31, note 1. The beautiful romance of *Thomas the Rhymer* is founded on the loves of the 'Laird of Ercildown' and the elfin queen.

So wylde;
For in that contre was ther noon,
That to him dorste ride or goon,
Neither wif ne childe.
Til that ther cam a greet geaunt,
His name was sir Olifaunt,[1]
A perilous man of dede;
He swar, 'Child, by Termagaunt,[2]
But[3] if thou prike out ef myn haunt,
Anoon I slee thy stede,[4]
With mace.
Heer is the queen of fayerie,
With harp, and lute, and symphonye,
Dwellyng in this place.'
The child sayd: 'Al so mote I the,
To morwe wil I meete with the,
Whan I have myn armure.
And yit I hope, par ma fay,
That thou schalt with this launcegay
Abyen it ful sore;

---

[1] *Sir Olifaunt* means *Sir Elephant*, an appropriate name, as Tyrwhitt observes, for a giant.

[2] Termagaunt was supposed to be one of the idols of the heathen. Thus, in the romance of *The King of Tars*, when the Soldan becomes a Christian, he is represented as destroying the images of his false gods:—

'He hente a staf with herte grete
And al his goddes he gan to bete,
And drouh hem alle adoun;
And leyde on til that he con swete
With sterne strokes and with grete
On Joryn and Plotoun,
On Astrot and sire Jovyn,
On *Tirmagaunt* and Apollin,
He hak hem scolle and croun;
On *Tirmagaunt* that was heore brother,
He lafte no lym hole with other,
Ne on his lord Scynt Mahoun.'

[3] The Harl. MS. reads *For*, which spoils the sense. The reading in the text is from the Lansd. MS.

[4] This reading is adopted from the Lansd. MS., as being evidently the correct one. The Harl. MS. reads as one line, *Anoon I slee the with mace.*—W.

Thy mawe
Schal I persyn, if that I may,
Er it be fully prime of day,
For heer schalt thou be slawe.'
Sir Thopas drough on bak ful fast;
This geaunt at him stoones cast
Out of a fell staf slynge;
But faire eschapeth child Thopas,
And al it was thurgh Goddis gras,
And thurgh his faire[1] berynge.
Yet lesteneth, lordynges, to my tale,
Merier than the nightyngale
I wòl yow roune,
How sir Thopas with sydes smale,
Prikynge over hul and dale,
Is come ageyn to toune.
His mery men comaunded he,
To make him bothe game and gle,
For needes most he fight
With a geaunt with heedes thre,
For paramours and jolite
Of oon that schon ful bright.
'Do come,' he sayde, 'my mynstrales
And gestours for to telle tales'[2]

---

[1] This word is added from the Lansd. MS.

[2] A *gestour* originally meant a person who recites the *gesta*, or historical romances. Thus Paulus Diaconus might have been called a *gestour*, because of his history entitled *Pauli Diaconi de Gestis Romanorum*. Tyrwhitt quotes the following lines from William of Nassyngton to show that a *gestour* was a very different person from our *jester*:—

'I warne you furst at the begynninge,
That I will make no vain carpinge
Of dedes of armys ne of amours,
As dus *mynstrelles* and *jestours*,
That makys carpinge in many a place
Of *Octaviane* and *Isembrace*,
And of many other jestes,
And namely whan they come to festes;
Ne of the life of *Beris of Hampton*,
That was a knight of great renoun,
Ne of *Sir Gye of Warwyke*,' &c.

Anoon in myn armynge,
Of romaunces that ben reales,[1]
Of popes and of cardinales,
And eek of love-longyng.'
Thay fet him first the swete wyn,
And made him eek in a maselyn
A real spicerye,
Of gyngebred that was so fyn,
And licorys, and eek comyn,
With sugre that is trye.
He dede next his white leere
Of cloth of lake whyt and cleere
A brech and eek a schert;'
And next his schert an aketoun,
And over that an haberjoun,
For persying of his hert;
And over that a fyn hauberk,
Was al i-wrought of Jewes werk,[2]

---

[1] So in the romance of *Ywain and Gawain*, MS., Cott. Galb. e. ix. :—

'He fund a knight under a tre:
Upon a cloth of gold he lay:
Byfor him sat a ful fayr may:
A lady sat with tham in fere;
The maiden red, that thai might here,
A *real romance* in that place.'

The original of this title, which is an uncommon one, I take to have been this. When the French romances found their way into Italy (not long before the year 1300, *Crescimb.*, t. i., p. 336), some Italian undertook to collect together all those relating to Charlemagne and his family, and to form them into a regular body of history. The six first books of this work come down to the death of Pepin. They begin thus:—'Qui se comenza la hystoria el *Real di Franza* comenzando a Constantino imperatore secondo molte lezende che io ho attrovate e racolte insieme.'—Edit. *Mutinæ*, 1491, fol. It was reprinted in 1537 under this title, *I reali di Franza*, &c. *Quadrio*, t. vi., p. 530. Salviati had seen a MS. of this work written about 1350 (*Crescimb.*, t. i., p. 330), and I do not believe that any mention of a *real* (or *royal*) *romance* is to be found, in French or English, prior to that date.—T. From the *real romance* is derived the *ballad royal*.

[2] Tyrwhitt supposes that *Jew's work* means work done by magic, and professes not to recollect having seen the Jews anywhere celebrated as skilful artificers. But surely the very names *jewel* and *jewellery* are derived from the fact that the Jews were the earliest and most skilful

Ful strong it was of plate;
And over that his cote-armour,
As whyt as is a lily flour,
In which he wold debate.
His scheld was al of gold so red,
And therinne was a bores heed,
A charbocle[1] by his syde;
And ther he swor on ale and bred[2]
How that the geaunt schal be deed,
Bytyde what betyde.

---

workers in the precious metals, and it is notorious that this is still their favourite trade. Every one who has seen ancient armour will recollect that the steel plates are often beautifully inlaid with gold and silver, which may well be called Jew's or jeweller's work. The *aketoun* was a coat of leather, sometimes padded, and worn under the armour. In this is clothed the knight, in the general Prologué. Over this Sir Thopas wears an *habergeon*, a piece of armour for the greater security of the breast; and over that the hauberk, or coat of mail, composed of scales or plates, which was the peculiar armour of a knight, hence called *loricatus*; and, finally, over all, his coat-armure or tabard, on which his arms were blazoned. It is no wonder that knights serving in a warm country like Palestine were often suffocated in their armour.

[1] *A carbuncle* (*escarboncle*, F.) was a common bearing.—Guillim's *Heraldry*, p. 109.—T.

[2] It seems almost impossible to account for this strange custom of making vows on dishes served at table, unless it be a remnant of the idolatrous heathen ceremony of invoking the gods at feasts and pouring out a libation to them. Tyrwhitt gives the following curious instance from Matthew of Westminster:—'When Edward I. was setting out upon his last expedition to Scotland in 1306, he knighted his eldest son and several other young noblemen with great solemnity. At the close of the whole (says Matthew of Westminster, p. 456), 'allati sunt in pompaticâ gloriâ duo *cygni* vel *olores* ante regem, phalerate retibus aureis vel fistulis deauratis, desiderabile spectaculum intuentibus. Quibus visis, Rex *votum vovit Deo cœli et cygnis* se proficisci in Scotiam, mortem Johannis Comyn et fidem læsam Scotorum vivus sive mortuus vindicaturus,' &c. The practice is alluded to in Dunbar's wish, that the King were John Thomsonnis man.' Maitland MS., st. 5:—

'I wold gif all that ever I haro
To that condition, so God me saif,
That ye had *vowit to the swan*
Ane yeir to be John Thomsonnis man.'

This fashion is ridiculed in the *Turnament of Tottenham*.—See Percy's *Reliques*:—

'I make a vow, quoth Dudman, and sweare by the stra (straw).'

His jambeux were of quirboily,
His swerdes schethe of yvory,
  His helm of latoun bright.
His sadel was of rowel boon,
His bridel as the sonne schon,
  Or as the moone light;
His spere was of fine cipres,
That bodeth werre, and no thing pees,
  The heed ful scharp i-grounde.
His steede was al dappul gray,
It goth an ambel in the way
  Ful softely and rounde
    In londe.
Lo, lordes, heer is a fyt;[1]
If ye wil eny more of it,
  To telle it wol I fonde.

FIT II.

NOW hold your mouth for charite,
  Bothe knight and lady fre,
And herkneth to my spelle;
Of batail and of chivalry,
Of ladys love and drewery,
  Anoon I wol yow telle.
Men speken of romauns of pris,
Of Horn child and of Ypotis,

It was common to swear by the peacock or pheasant, and vows were, of course, constantly made to the ladies.

[1] According to Percy this word is used by Anglo-Saxon writers to signify a 'poetic strain, verse, or poem.' Thus, King Alfred, in his *Boethius*, having given a version of Lib. iii., metr. 5, adds, 'Thare wisdom tha thas *fitte* asungen hæfde,' when wisdom had sung these *fitte*, or verses. And in the proem to the same book, 'Fon on *fitte*,' put into verse. Now it seems evident from this that *fitte* is nothing more than *feet*, or metre, and that it was afterwards applied to the divisions of a poem. All poetry in early times being sung to music, *fitte* then came to be applied to a strain of music; thence, by a very obvious transition, to the division of a dance, or the chapter of a book even in prose; but, as Percy remarks, in a ludicrous or sarcastic sense.

Of Bevys and sir Gy,
Of sir Libeaux, and Pleyndamour;[1]
But sir Thopas bereth the flour
Of real chivalry.

---

[1] All the romances here mentioned, except *Pleyndamour*, are still extant. That of *Horn Child* is considered by Warton to be the earliest in our language. It begins thus:—

'Alle heo ben blythe,
That to my songe ylythe.
A song ychulle ou singe
Of Allof the gode Kinge.
King he wes by weste;
The whiles hit yleste;
Ant Godylt his gode quene,
No feyrore myhte bene,
Ant huere sone hihte Horn,
Feyrore childe ne myhte be born.'

The romance of *Sir Bevis of Hampton* is given in Ellis's *Specimens*. It is found in Provençal among the MSS. of the Queen of Sweden in the Vatican, and is said by Carew (*Survey of Cornwall*) to have been written by Walter of Exeter, a Franciscan friar of Carocus, in Cornwall, in 1292. *Guy of Warwick* is also to be found in Ellis's *Specimens*. There is a very old version in French in the Harleian collection, No. 3775. In the romance, the hero's combat with the dragon in Northumberland is said to be represented in tapestry in Warwick Castle:—

'In Warwike the truth shall ye see,
In arras wrought full craftely.'

This piece of arras is specially mentioned in a grant from Richard II., dated 1398, conveying 'that suit of arras hangings in Warwick Castle, which contains the story of the famous Guy, Earl of Warwick,' together with the castle itself, to Holland, Earl of Kent. The fame of the celebrated hero of English romance reached even Palestine; for Dugdale relates that in the reign of Henry IV., about 1410, a Lord Beauchamp, travelling in the East, was hospitably received at Jerusalem by the Soldain Lieutenant, 'who, hearing that he was descended from the famous Guy of Warwick, *whose story they had in books of their own language*, invited him to his palace,' &c.—See Warton, *Hist. Engl. Poetry*, sect. iii. *Libeaux disconus* is in the Cotton. MSS., Calig. ii. In the twelfth stanza, as Tyrwhitt observes, we find his true name with its meaning:—

'Now clepeth him alle thus
Ly beau desconus
For the love of me.
Than may ye wete arowe
The fayre unknowe,
Certes so hatte he.'

Ypotis is rather a religious poem, than a romance.—See Warton, *Hist. Engl. Poetry*, s. v.

His goode steede he bistrood,
And forth upon his way he glood,
  As spark out of the bronde;[1]
Upon his crest he bar a tour,
And therin stiked a lily flour:—
  God schilde his corps fro schonde!
And for he was a knyght auntrous,
He nolde slepen in noon hous,
  But liggen in his hood.
His brighte helm was his wonger,
And by him baytith his destrer
  Of herbes fyne and goode.
Him self drank water of the welle,
As dede the knight sir Percivelle[2]
  So worthy under wede,
Til on a day———

PROLOGE TO MELIBEUS.

'NO mor of this, for Goddes dignite!'
  Quod our Hoste, 'for thou makest me
So wery of thy verray lewednesse,
That, al so wisly God my soule blesse,
Myn eeres aken for thy drafty[3] speche.
Now such a rym the devel I byteche!
This may wel be rym dogerel,' quoth he.
'Why so?' quod I, 'why wilt thou lette me

[1] The same simile is in *Isambras*, fol. 130, 6:—
'He spronge forth as sparke of glede.'—T.

[2] The romance of *Perceval le Gallois* is attributed to Chrestien de Troyes, and is supposed by Warton to have been written before 1191. It belongs to the story of the *Quest of the Sangraal* (the cup, or chalice, of the Gospel); which appears to be a religious allegory, representing the sinner's pursuit of justification through the blood of Christ (*sang réal*) by the adventures of the knights in their quest of the sangraal. If this interpretation be correct, the real gist of the story has hitherto escaped the antiquaries.

[3] In this place and a few lines lower, where *drasty* occurs again, the reading of Speght and Tyrwhitt has been adopted. *Drasty* is not very obvious, and the letter *f* might easily have been mistaken for *s*.

More of my tale than another man,
Syn that it is the beste rym that I can?'
'By God!' quod he, 'for pleinly at o word,
Thy drafty rymyng is not worth a tord;
Thou dost nought elles but despendist tyme.
Sir, at o word, thou schalt no lenger ryme.
Let se wher thou canst tellen ought in gest,
Or telle in prose som what atte lest,
In which ther be som merthe or doctrine.'
'Gladly,' quod I, 'by Goddes swete pyne,
I wol yow telle a litel thing in prose,
That oughte like yow, as I suppose,
Or elles certes ye be to daungerous.
It is a moral tale vertuous,
Al be it told som tyme in sondry wise
Of sondry folk, as I schal yow devyse.
As thus, ye woot that every evaungelist,
That telleth us the peyne of Jhesu Crist,
Ne saith not alle thing as his felawes doth;
But natheles here sentence is al soth,
And alle accorden as in here sentence,
Al be ther in her tellyng difference.[1]
For some of hem sayn more, and some lesse,
Whan thay his pitous passioun expresse;—
I mene of Mark and Mathew, Luk and Johan;—
But douteles her sentence is al oon.
Therfor, lordynges alle, I yow biseche,
If yow think that I varye as in my speche,
As thus, though that I telle som what more
Of proverbes, than ye[2] have herd bifore
Comprehended in this litel tretys here,
To enforcen with theffect of my matiere,
And though I not the same wordes say
As ye have herd, yit to yow alle I pray,

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[1] All agree in the sense, though the manner of telling be different.

[2] *Ye* has been adopted from the Lansd. MS. rather than *I*, the reading of the Harl. MS.

Blameth me nought; for, in my sentence,
Schul ye no wher fynde difference
Fro the sentence of this tretys lite,
After the which this litil tale I write.
And therfor herkeneth what I schal say,
And let me tellen al my tale, I pray.'

THE TALE OF MELIBEUS.

[THIS tale, as Tyrwhitt informs us, is a mere translation from *Le Livre de Melibée et de Dame Prudence*, two copies of which are preserved in the British Museum, MSS. Reg. 19, c. vii. and xi., in French prose. Dufresnoy, *Bibliot. des Romans*, vol. ii. p. 248, mentions two copies, *en vers dans la Bibliothéque Seguier;* and a prose version inserted in the *Ménagier de Paris*, an early work on domestic economy, lately republished by the *Société des Bibliophiles François*. It is an interesting example of the 'moral tale vertuous,' which Erasmus mentions in his *Ecclesiastes*, as forming part of the stock of a professional gestour. One of the most remarkable features of the story is the frequency of its references to Scripture, which prove that in Chaucer's time the Bible was familiar to the people. All these references will be found verified in the notes. It may be added that we have in this instance a strong evidence, if any evidence were needed since the publication of Dr. Maitland's Essays, that those who object in the present day to the general diffusion of the Bible, cannot claim the authority of the middle ages in support of their views. The reader will observe that the opening of this tale (alluded to in the Introduction, vol. i., p. 57) continually runs into blank verse.]

A YONG man called Melibeus, mighty and riche, bygat upon his wif, that called was Prudens, a doughter which that called was Sophie.[1] Upon a day

[1] The name of the daughter is omitted in both the French MSS.—W.

byfel, that for his desport he is went into the feldes him to play. His wif and his doughter eek hath he laft within his hous, of which the dores were fast i-schitte. Thre[1] of his olde foos han it espyed, and setten laddres to the walles of his hous, and by the wyndowes ben entred, and betyn his wyf, and woundid his doughter with fyve mortal woundes, in fyve sondry places, that is to sayn, in here feet, in here hondes, in here eeres, in here nose, and in here mouth; and lafte her for deed, and went away.

Whan Melibeus retourned was into his hous, and seigh al this meschief, he, lik a man mad, rendyng his clothes, gan wepe and crie. Prudens his wyf, as ferforth as sche dorste, bysought him of his wepyng to stynte. But not forthi he gan to crie ever lenger the more.

This noble wyf Prudence remembred hire upon the sentens of Ovide,[2] in his book that cleped is the Remedy of Love, wher as he seith: He is a fool that distourbeth the moder to wepe in the deth of hir childe, til sche have i-wept hir fille, as for a certeyn tyme; and than schal man doon his diligence as with amyable wordes hire to recomforte and praye hire of hire wepyng to stinte. For which resoun this noble wif Prudens suffred hir housbonde for to wepe and crie, as for a certeyn space; and whan sche seigh hir tyme, sche sayd him in this wise: 'Allas! my lord,' quod sche, 'why make ye youre self for to be lik a fool? Forsothe it apperteyneth not to a wys man, to make such sorwe. Youre doughter, with the grace of God, schal warischt be and eschape. And al were it so that sche right now were deed, ye ne oughte nought as for hir deth youre silf destroye. Senec saith, The wise man schal not take to gret discomfort for the deth of his children,

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[1] The Lands. MS. and Tyrwhitt read four; the French MSS. *trois*, which Mr. Wright observes was a favourite number in medieval tales.

[2] *Remedium Amoris*:—

'Quis matrem, nisi mentis inops, in funere nati
Flere vetet?'

but certes he schulde suffren it in pacience, as wel as he abydeth the deth of his owne persone.'

This Melibeus answerde anoon and sayde: 'What man,' quod he, 'schuld of his wepynge stynte, that hath so gret a cause for to wepe? Jhesu Crist, oure Lord, him self wepte for the deth of Lazarus his frend.'[1] Prudens answerde: 'Certes, wel I wot, attemperel wepyng is no thing defended to him that sorwful is, amonges folk in sorwe, but it is rather graunted him to wepe. The apostel Poule unto the Romayns writeth,[2] A man schal rejoyce with hem that maken joye, and wepe with such folk as wepen. But though attemperel wepyng be graunted, outrageous wepynge certes is defended. Mesure of wepynge schuld be conserved, after the lore of Crist that techeth us Senec; Whan that thi frend is deed, quod he, let nought thin yen to moyste ben of teres, ne to moche drye; although the teeres come to thine eyghen,[3] let hem not falle. And whan thou hast for-gon thy frend, do diligence to gete another frende; and this is more wisedom than to wepe for thy frend, which that thou hast lorn, for therin is no boote. And therfore if ye governe yow by sapience, put away sorwe out of youre hert. Remembreth yow that Jhesus Sirac[4] saith, A man that is joyous and glad in herte, it him conserveth florischinge in his age; but sothly sorweful herte maketh his boones drye. He[5] saith eek thus, that sorwe in herte sleth ful many a man. Salamon saith, that right as motthes in schepes flees annoyeth the clothes, and the smale wormes to the tre, right so annoyeth sorwe to the herte. Wherfore us oughte as wel in the deth of

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[1] John xi. 35. [2] Rom. xii. 15.

[3] 'Car jà soit ce que la lerme viengne à l'ueuil, elle ne doit point yssir dehors.' The Harl. MS. has *come out of thine eyghen*; the Lansd. MS. *comen of*.—W. The reading in the text is from Tyrwhitt.

[4] This is taken from Prov. xvii. 22, not from the book of Ecclesiasticus, written by Jesus, the son of Sirac, as here quoted.

[5] This text, however, is from Ecclus. xxx. 25.

oure children, as in the losse of oure goodes temporales, have pacience. Remembreth yow upon the pacient Job, whan he hadde lost his children and his temporal substance, and in his body endured and receyved ful many a grevous tribulacioun, yit sayde he thus:[1] Oure Lord it sent unto me, oure Lord it hath raft fro me; right so as oure Lord wil, right so be it doon; i-blessed be the name of oure Lord!' To these forsayde thinges answerith Melibeus unto his wif Prudens: 'Alle thine wordes ben soth,' quod he, 'and therto profytable, but sothly myn herte is so troubled with this sorwe, that I noot what to doone.' 'Let calle,' quod Prudence, 'thy trewe frendes alle, and thy linage, whiche that ben trewe and wise; telleth hem youre grevaunce, and herken what thay say in counseilynge, and yow governe after here sentence. Salamon[2] saith, Werke al thi thing by counseil, and the thar never rewe.'

Than, by the counseil of his wyf Prudens, this Melibeus let calle a gret congregacioun of peple, as surgiens, phisiciens, olde, and yonge, and some of his olde enemyes recounsiled (as by her semblaunt) to his love and to his grace; and therwithal ther come some of his neighebours, that deden him reverence more for drede than for love, as happeth ofte. Ther comen also ful many subtil flaterers, and wise advoketes lerned in the lawe. And whan these folk togidere assemblid were, this Melibeus in sorwful wyse schewed hem his caas, and by the maner of his speche, it semed that in herte he bar a cruel ire, redy to do vengeance upon his foos, and sodeynly desirede that the werre schulde bygynne; but natheles yit axed he her counseil in this matier. A sirurgien, by licens and assent of suche as were wyse, up ros, and to Melibeus sayde, as ye may hiere.

'Sire,' quod he, 'as to us sirurgiens apperteineth, that we do to every wight the beste that we can, wher

[1] Job i. 21. [2] Ecclus. xxxii. 24.

as we ben withholde, and to oure pacient that we do no damage; wherfore it happeth many tyme and ofte, that whan tweye han everich wounded other, oo same surgien heleth hem bothe; where unto oure art it is not perteyned to norische werre, ne parties to supporte. But certes, as to warisching of youre doughter, al be it so that sche perilously be woundid, we schullen do so tentyf besynes fro day to night, that with the grace of God sche schal be hool and sound, als soone as it is possible.' Almost right in the same wise the phisiciens answerden, save that thay sayden a fewe wordes more; that ryght as maladies ben cured by her contraries, right so schal men warissch werre by vengeaunce.[1] His neygheboures ful of envy, his feyned freendes that semede recounsiled, and his flatereres, maden semblaunt of wepyng, and appaired and aggregged moche of this matiere, in preisyng gretly Melibe of might, of power, of riches, and of frendes, despisinge the power of his adversaries; and sayden outerly, that he anoon schulde wreke him on his adversaries be bygynnynge of werre.

Up roos thanne an advocate that was wys, by leve and by counseil of othere that were wise, and sayde: 'Lordynges, the needes for whiche we ben assemblit in this place is ful hevy thing, and an heigh matier, bycause of the wrong and of the wikkednes that hath ben doon, and eek by resoun of the gret damages that in tyme comyng ben possible to falle for the same, and eek bycause of the grete richesse and power of the partes bothe; for the which resouns, it were a ful gret peril to erren in these materes. Wherfore, Melibeus, this is oure sentence; we counseile yow, aboven alle thinges, that right anoon thou do diligence in kepyng of thy body in such a wyse that thou ne wante noon espye ne wacche thy body for to save. And after that,

[1] Heal, to put a stop to, war by taking vengeance, a literal and very happy translation from the French, preserving even the jingle of the words. '*Auset doit on guerir guerre par vengence.*'

we counseile that in thin hous thou sette suffisaunt garnisoun, so that thay may as wel thy body as thin hous defende. But certes for to moeve werre, ne sodeynly for to do vengeance, we may not deme in so litel tyme that it were profitable. Wherfore we axen leysir and a space to have deliberacioun in this caas to demen; for the comune proverbe saith this; he that soone demeth, soone schal repente. And eek men sayn, that thilke juge is wys, that soone understondeth a matier, and juggeth by leysir. For al be it so, that alle taryinge is anoyful, algates it is no reproof to gevynge of juggement, ne of vengaunce takyng, whan it is suffisaunt and resonable. And that schewed oure Lord Jhesu Crist by ensample, for whan that the womman that was i-take in advoutrie,[1] was brought in his presence to knowen what schulde be doon of hir persone, al be it that he wist him self what that he wolde answere, yit wolde he not answere sodeynly, but he wolde have deliberacioun, and in the ground hem wrot twyes. And by these causes we axe deliberacioun; and we schul thanne by the grace of God counseile the thing that schal be profytable.' Upstarten thenne the yonge folkes anoon at oones, and the moste parte of that companye han skorned these olde wise men, and bygonne to make noyse and sayden: 'Right so as whil that iren is hoot men scholden smyte, right so schulde men wreke here wronges, whil that thay ben freische and newe;' and with lowde vois thay cryde, 'Werre, werre.'

Uproos tho oon of these olde wise, and with his hond make countenaunce that men schulde holde hem stille, and given him audience. 'Lordyngs,' quod he, 'ther is ful many a man that crieth 'werre, werre,' that wot ful litel what werre amounteth. Werre at his bygynnyng hath so greet an entre and so large, that every wight may entre whan him liketh, and lightly

[1] John viii. 3.

fynde werre; but certes what ende schal falle therof, it is not lightly to knowe. For sothly whan that werre is oones bygonne, ther is ful many a child unbore of his mooder that schal sterve yonge, bycause of thilke werre, or elles lyve in sorwe and deye in wrecchidnes; and therfore, er that eny werre be bygonne, men moste have gret counseil and gret deliberacioun.' And whan this olde man wende to enforce his tale by resouns, wel neigh alle at oones bygonne thay to rise, for to breke his tale, and beden him ful ofte his wordes to abrigge. For sothly he that precheth to hem that liste not to heere his wordes, his sermoun hem anoyeth. For Jhesus Sirac saith, that musik in wepyng is a noyous thing.[1] This is to say, as moche avayleth to speke to-fore folk to whiche his speche annoyeth, as it is to synge byfore hem whiche that wepith. And whan this wise man saugh him wanted audience, al schamefast he sette him doun agayn. For Salamon saith,[2] ther as thou may have noon audience, enforce the not to speke. 'I se wel,' quod this wise man, 'that the comune proverbe is soth, that good counseil wantith, whan it is most neede.' Yit hadde this Melibeus in his counseil many folk, that prively in his eere counseled him the contrarie in general audience.

Whan Melibeus hadde herd that the grettest party of his counseil were accorded that he schulde make werre, anoon he consented to here coynseilyng, and fully affermed here sentence. Thanne dame Prudence, whan that sche saugh that hir housbonde schop him to wreke him of his enemyes, and to gynne werre, sche in ful humble wise, whan sche saugh hire tyme, sayde him these wordes; 'My lord,' quod sche, 'I yow biseche as hertily as I dar and kan, ne haste yow nought to faste, and for alle guerdouns as geve me audience.

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *wepyng in musik;* but the other reading, taken from the Lansd. MS., is authorised not only by the French original, but it is required by the context.—W. Ecclus. xxii. 6.

[2] Prov. xxiii. 9.

For Peres Alfons[1] saith, Who that doth to the outher good or harm, haste the nought to quyten him, for in this wise thy freend wil abyde, and thin enemy schal the lenger lyve in drede. The proverbe saith, He hastith wel that wisly can abyde; and in wikked haste is no profyt.' This Melibeus answerde unto his wyf Prudens; 'I purpose not,' quod he, 'to werke by thy counseil, for many causes and resouns; for certes every wight wolde holde me thanne a fool; this is to sayn, if I for thy counseil wolde chaunge thinges that affermed ben by so many wise. Secoundly, I say that alle wommen be wikked, and noon good of hem alle. For of a thousand men, saith Salamon,[2] I fond oon good man; but certes of alle wommen good womman fond I never oon. And also certes, if I governede me by thy counseil, it schulde seme that I hadde given to the over me the maistry; and God forbeede er it so were. For Jhesus Sirac saith, that if a wif have maistrie, sche is contrarious to hir housbond. And Salamon saith,[3] Never in thy lif to thy wyf, ne to thy child, ne to thy freend, ne geve no power over thi self; for better it were that thy children axen of thy persone thinges that been needful to hem, than thou se thi self in the hondes of thy children. And also, if I wolde werke by thy counselynge, certes it most som tyme be secré, til it were tyme that it moste be knowe; and this ne may not be.'[4]

[1] He calls himself *Petrus Alfunsi* in his *Dialogus contra Judæos*, Harl. MS. 3861. He there informs us that he was himself originally a Jew, but converted and baptized in the year 1106, in July, on the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, upon which account he took the name of Peter. Alphonsus I. of Arragon and VII. of Castile being his godfather, gave him the name of Alphonsus. After his conversion he wrote the dialogue above mentioned, and also his celebrated book, *De Clericali Disciplinâ*, a collection of precepts delivered by a philosopher to his son, enforced by apposite fables and apologues. This is one of the sources of fable upon which succeeding story-tellers, from the compiler of the *Gesta Romanorum* down to Cervantes, have drawn. See Tyrwhitt.

[2] Ecclus. vii. 28. [3] Ecclus. xxxiii. 20.

[4] Tyrwhitt here gives the original of a passage which seems to have

Whan dame Prudence, ful debonerly and with gret pacience, hadde herd al that hir housbonde liked for to seye, thanne axed sche of him licence for to speke, and sayde in this wise; 'My lord,' quod sche, 'as to youre firste resoun, certes it may lightly be answered; for I say it is no foly to chaunge counsel whan the thing is chaungid, or elles whan the thing semeth otherwise than it was biforn. And moreover I say, though that ye han sworn and i-hight to parforme youre emprise, and natheles ye wayve to parforme thilke same emprise by juste cause, men schulde not say therfore that ye were a lyere, ne for-sworn; for the book seith, that the wise man maketh no lesyng, whan he torneth his corrage to the better. And al be it so that youre emprise be establid and ordeyned by gret multitude of people, yet thar ye not accomplise thilke same ordinaunce but you like; for the prouthe of a thing, and the profyt, ben rather founde in fewe folk that ben wise and ful of resoun, than by gret multitude of folk, ther every man crieth and clatereth what that him liketh; sothely such multitude is not honest. And to the secounde resoun, wher as ye sayn, that alle wommen ben wikke; save youre grace, certis ye despise alle wommen in this wise, and he that alle despysith, saith the book, alle displeseth.[1] And Senec saith, Who so wil have sapience, schal no man disprayse, but he schal gladly teche the science that he can, withoute presumpcioun or pryde; and suche thinges as he nought can, he schal not ben aschamed to lerne hem, and enquere of lasse folk than himself. And, sire, that ther hath be ful many a good womman may lightly be proeved; for certes, sire, our Lord

been omitted by mistake: '*Car il est escript, la gengleric des femmes ne puet riens celler fors ce qu'elle ne scet. Apres le philosophre dit, en mauvais conseils les femmes vainquent les hommes, et par ces raisons je ne dois point user de ton conseil.*'

[1] 'Car il est escript, qui tout desprise, à tous desplaist.' The words *alle displeseth* are omitted in the Harl. MS.—W.

Jhesu Crist nolde never han descended to be borne of a womman,[1] if alle wommen hadde ben wikke. And after that, for the grete bounte that is in wommen, oure Lord Jhesu Crist, whan he was risen fro deth to lyve, apperede rather to a womman than to his apostles.[2] And though that Salamon say, he fond never goode womman, it folwith nought therfore, that alle wommen ben wikke; for though that he fonde noone goode wommen, certes many another man hath founden many a womman ful goode and trewe. Or elles paraventure thentent of Salamon was this, as in sovereyn bounte he fond no womman; this is to say, that ther is no wight that hath soverein bounte, save God aloone, as he him self recordeth in his Evaungelie.[3] For ther nys no creature so good, that him ne wantith som what of the perfeccioun of God that is his makere. Youre thridde resoun is this; ye seyn that if ye governed yow by counsel of me, it schulde seme that ye hadde geve me the maystry and the lordschipe over youre persone. Sire, save youre grace, it is not so; for if so were that no man schulde be counseiled but by hem that hadde maystrie and lordschipe of his persone, men wolde nought be counseiled so ofte; for sothly thilke man that axeth counseil of a purpos, yet hath he fre chois whether he wil werke by that purpos or non. And as to youre ferthe resoun, ther ye sayn that the jenglerie of wommen can hyde thinges that thay wot not of; as who saith, that a womman can nought hyde that sche woot; sire, these wordes ben understonde of wommen that ben jangelers and wikke; of whiche wommen men sayn that thre thinges dryven a man out of his oughne hous; that is to say, smoke, droppyng of reyn, and wikked wyfes. Of suche wommen saith Salamon, that it were better to a man to dwelle in desert, than with a womman that is

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The whole of this passage has been accidentally omitted by the scribe of the Harl. MS. It is here supplied from the Lansd. MS.—W.

[1] Mark xvi. 9. [2] Matt. xix. 17.

riotous.[1] And, sire, by youre leve, that am not I; for ye han ful ofte assayed my grete silence and my grete pacience, and eek how wel that I can hyde and hele thinges that ben secrely to hyde. And sothly, as to youre fyfte resoun, wher as he sayn, that in wikkede counseil wommen venquisscheth men, God wot thilke resoun stont here in no stede; for understondith now, ye axen counseil to do wickidnes; and if ye wil wirke wickidnes, and youre wyf restreyne thilke wicked purpos, and overcome you by resoun and by good counseil, certes youre wyf oweth rather be preised than y-blamed. Thus schulde ye understonde the philosopher that seith, In wicked counseil wommen venquyschen her housbondes. And ther as ye blame alle wymmen and here resouns, I schal schewe by many resouns and ensamples that many a womman hath ben ful good, and yit been, and here counseiles ful holsome and profitable. Eke some men had sayd, that the counseilyng of wommen is outher to dere, or to litel of pris. But al be it so that ful many a womman is badde, and hir counseil vile and not worth, yet han men founde many a ful good womman, and ful discret and wys in counseilyng. Lo, Jacob, by counseil of his moder Rebecca,[2] wan the blessyng of his fader Ysaac, and the lordschipe of alle his bretheren. Judith,[3] by hire good counseil, delyvered the citee of Bethulie, in which sche dwellid, out of the honde of Olophernus, that had byseged it, and wolde it al destroye. Abigayl[4] delivered Nabal hir housbond fro David the king, that wolde have i-slayn him, and appesed the ire of the kyng by hir witte, and by hir good counseilynge. Hester[5] by good counseil enhaunsed gretly the poeple of God, in the regne of Assuerus the kyng. And the same bounte in good counseilyng of many a good womman may men rede and telle. And

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[1] Prov. xxi. 19. [2] Gen. xxvii. [3] Book of Judith.
[4] 1 Samuel xxv. 18. [5] Esther.

moreover, whan oure Lord had creat Adam oure forme fader, he sayd in this wise: It is not goode to be a man aloone; make we to him an help semblable to him self.[1] Here may ye se that if that a womman were not good, and hir counseil good and profytable, oure Lord God of heven wolde neither have wrought hem, ne called hem help of man, but rather confusioun of man. And ther sayde oones a clerk in tuo versus,[2] What is better than gold? Jasper. And what is better than jasper? Wisedom. And what is better than wisedom? Womman. And what is better than a good womman? No thing. And, sire, by many other resouns may ye se, and many wommen ben goode, and eek her counseil good[3] and profitable. And therfore, if ye wil truste to my counseil, I schal restore you youre doughter hool and sound; and eek I wil doon you so moche, that ye schul have honour in this cause.'

Whan Melibe had herd these wordes of his wif Prudens, he seide thus: 'I se wel that the word of Salamon is soth; he seith, that the wordes that ben spoken discretly by ordinaunce, been hony-combes, for thay geven swetnes to the soule, and holsomnes[4] to the body. And, wyf, bycause of thy swete wordes, and eek for I have assayed and proved

[1] Gen. ii. 18.

[2] I have not met with the two verses in question; but they seem to be a modification of a distich which is not uncommon in MSS., and which is printed thus in the *Reliq. Antiq.*, i. p. 19:—

'Auro quid melius? jaspis. Quid jaspide? sensus.
Sensu quid? ratio. Quid ratione? nihil.'

In the manuscript from which this distich is there printed, it is coupled with another much less favourable to the fair sex than the version given by Dame Prudence:—

'Vento quid levius? fulgur. Quid fulgure? flamma.
Flammâ quid? mulier. Quid muliere? nihil.'—W.

[3] These words have been accidentally omitted in the Harl. MS.—W.

[4] The Harl. MS. reads erroneously *holines*. The French original has *et santé au corps*.—W. Prov. xvi. 24.

thi grete sapiens and thi grete trouthe, I wil governe me by thy counseil in alle thinges.'

'Now, sire,' quod dame Prudens, 'and syn ye vouchen sauf to be governed by my counsellyng, I wil enforme you how ye schul governe youre self, in chesyng of youre counseil. Ye schul first in alle youre werkes mekely biseche to the hihe God, that he wol be your counseilour; and schape you to that entent that he give you counseil and confort, as taughte Toby his sone.[1] At alle tymes thou schalt blesse God, and pray him to dresse thy wayes; and loke that alle thi counseiles be in him for evermore. Seint Jame[2] eek saith: If eny of yow have neede of sapiens, axe it of God. And aftirward, thanne schul ye take counseil in youre self, and examine wel your thoughtes, of suche thinges as you thinkith that is best for youre profyt. And thanne schul ye dryve fro youre herte thre thinges[3] that ben contrarie to good counseil; that is to say, ire, coveytise, and hastynes. First, he that axeth counseil of him self, certes, he moste be withoute ire, for many cause. The first is this: he that hath gret ire and wraththe in him self, he weneth alwey he may do thing that he may not doo. And secoundly, he that is irous and wroth, he may not wel deme; and he that may not wel deme, may nought wel counseile. The thridde is this: that he that is irous and wroth, as saith Senec, may not speke but blameful thinges, and with his vicious wordes he stireth other folk to anger and to ire. And eek, sire, ye moste dryve coveitise out of youre herte. For thapostle saith that coveytise is roote of alle harmes.[4] And trusteth wel, that a coveitous man ne can not deme ne thinke, but oonly

[1] Tobit iv. 20. [2] James i. 5.

[3] The Harl. MS. reads imperfectly *hertes tho that ben*, and the Lansd. MS. omits the word *thre*, which, however, is requisite to give the full sense of the original,—'Et lors tu dois oster de toy troix choses qui sont contraires à conseil.'—W. [4] 1 Tim. vi. 10.

to fulfille the ende of his coveitise; and certes that may never ben accomplished; for ever the more abundaunce that he hath of riches, the more he desireth. And, sire, ye moste also dryve out of your herte hastynes; for certes ye may nought deme for the best a sodein thought that falleth in youre herte, but ye moste avyse you on it ful ofte. For as ye herde here biforn, the comune proverbe is this; that he that soone demeth, soone repentith. Sire, ye ben not alway in lik disposicioun, for certis som thing that som tyme semeth to yow that it is good for to doo, another tyme it semeth to you the contrarie. Whan ye han taken counseil in youre selven, and han demed by good deliberacioun such thing as yow semeth best, thanne rede I you that ye kepe it secre. Bywreye nought youre counseil to no persone, but it so be that ye wene sicurly, that thurgh youre bywreyinge youre condicioun schal be to yow the more profytable. For Jhesus Syrac saith,[1] Neither to thi foo ne to thi freend discovere not thy secre ne thy foly; for they wil give you audience and lokyng and supportacioun in thi presence, and scorn in thin absence. Another clerk saith, that skarsly schal thou fynde eny persone that may kepe counseil secreely. The book saith:[2] Whil thou kepist thi counsail in thin herte, thou kepest it in thi prisoun; and whan thou bywreyest thi counseil to any wight, he holdeth the in his snare. And therfore yow is better hyde youre counseil in youre herte, than prayen him to whom ye have bywryed youre counseil, that he wol kepe it clos and stille. For Seneca saith: If so be that thou ne maist not thin owne counseil hyde, how darst thou preyen any other wight thy counseil secreely to kepe? But natheles, if thou wene sccurly that thy bywreying of thy counseil to a persone wol make thy condicioun stonde in the better plite, thanne schalt thou telle him thy counseil

[1] Ecclus. xix. 8. [2] Ecclus. viii. 22.

in this wise. First, thou schalt make no semblaunt wher the were lever werre or pees, or this or that; ne schewe him not thi wille and thin entent; for truste wel that comunly these counseilours ben flaterers, namely the counselours of grete lordes, for thay enforcen hem alway rather to speke plesaunt wordes enclynyng to the lordes lust, than wordes that been trewe and profytable. And therfore men say, that the riche man hath selden good counseil, but if he have it of him self. And after that thou schalt consider thy frendes and thy enemyes. And as touching thy frendes, thou schalt considere which of hem beth most faithful and most wise, and eldest and most approvyd in counsaylinge; and of hem schalt thou axe thy counsail, as the caas requireth.

'I say, that first ye schul clepe to your counseil your frendes that ben trewe. For Salamon[1] saith, that right as the hert of a man delitith in savour that is soote, right so the counseil of trewe frendes geveth swetnes to the soule. He saith also, ther may no thing be likened to the trewe freend;[2] for certes gold ne silver beth nought so moche worth as the good wil of a trewe freend. And eek he sayde, that a trewe frend is a strong defens; who that it fyndeth, certes he fyndeth a gret tresour.[3] Thanne schul ye eek considere if that youre trewe frendes ben discrete and wyse; for the book saith, Axe thi counseil alwey of hem that ben wyse.[4] And by this same resoun schul ye clepe to youre counseil of youre frendes that ben of age, such as have i-seye sightes and ben expert in many thinges, and ben approvyd in counseylinges. For the book saith,[5] that in olde men is the sapience, and in louge tyme the prudence. And Tullius saith, that grete thinges ben not ay accompliced by strengthe, ne by delyvernes of body, but by good counseil, by

[1] Prov. xxvii. 9. [2] Prov. xviii. 24. [3] Ecclus. vi. 14.
[4] Prov. xxii. 17. Ecclus. ix. 14. [5] Job xii. 12.

auctorite of persones, and by science; the whiche thre thinges ne been not feble by age, but certis they enforsen and encresen day by day. And thanne schul ye kepe this for a general reule. First schul ye clepe to youre counseil a fewe of youre frendes that ben especial. For Salamon[1] saith, Many frendes have thou, but among a thousand chese the oon to be thy counseilour. For al be it so, that thou first ne telle thy counseil but to a fewe, thou mayst afterward telle it to mo folk, if it be neede. But loke alwey that thy counseilours have thilke thre condiciouns that I have sayd bifore; that is to say, that they ben trewe, and olde, and of wys experiens. And werke nought alwey in every need by oon counseilour alloone; for som tyme byhoveth it be counseiled by many. For Salamon saith,[2] Salvacioun of thinges is wher as there beth many counseilors.

'Now sith that I have told yow of whiche folk ye schul be counseiled, now wille I telle yow which counseil ye ought eschiewe. First, ye schal eschiewe the counseil of fooles; for Salamon saith,[3] Take no counseil of a fool, for he ne can not counseile but after his oughne lust and his affeccioun. The book seith,[4] that the proprete of a fool is this: he troweth lightly harm of every wight, and lightly troweth alle bounte in him self. Thow schalt eschiewe eek the counseil of alle flaterers, suche as enforcen hem rathere to prayse youre persone by flaterie, than for to telle yow the sothfastnesse of thinges. Wherfore Tullius saith, Amonges alle pestilences that ben in frendschipe the grettest is flaterie. And therfore is it more neede that thou eschiewe and drede flaterers, more than eny other peple. The book saith,[5] Thou schalt rather drede and flee fro the swete wordes of flaterers, then fro the egre wordes of thy frend that saith the thi

[1] Ecclus. vi. 6. [2] Prov. xi. 14. [3] Ecclus. viii. 17.
[4] Prov. xxi. 10. [5] Prov. xxviii. 23.

sothes. Salamon saith,[1] that the wordes of a flaterer is a snare to cacche in innocentz. He saith also, He that speketh to his frend wordes of swetnesse and of plesaunce, setteth a nette byfore his feet to cacchen him. And therfore saith Tullius, Encline not thin eeres to flaterers, ne tak no counseil of the wordes of flaterers. And Catoun[2] saith, Avyse the wel, and eschiewe wordes of swetnes and of plesaunce. And eek thou schalt eschiewe the counselyng of thin olde enemys that be recounsiled. The book saith, that no wight retorneth safly[3] into the grace of his olde enemyes. And Ysope[4] saith, Ne trust not to hem, with which thou hast had som tyme werre or enmyte, ne telle not hem thy counseil. And Seneca telleth the cause why; it may not be, saith he, that wher as a greet fuyr hath longe tyme endured, that ther ne leveth som vapour of hete. And therfore saith Salamon, In thin olde enemy trust thou nevere.[5] For sicurly, though thin enemy be reconsiled, and make the cheer of humilite, and lowteth to the his heed, ne trist him never; for certes he makith thilke feyned humilite more for his profyt, than for eny love of thi persone; bycause he demyth to have victorie over thi persone by such feyned countynaunce, the which victorie he might nought have by stryf and werre. And Petir Alphons[6] saith: Make no felaschipe with thine olde enemyes, for if thou do hem bounte, they wil perverten it into wikkednes. And eek thou most eschiewe the counseilynge of hem that ben thy servauntz, and beren the gret reverence; for paraventure thai say it more for drede than for love. And ther-

[1] Prov. xxix. 5.

[2] He refers, I presume, to Cato, lib. iii. dist. 6:—

'Sermones blandos blæsosque cavere memento.'—T.

[3] In the French original, *seurement*. The Harl. MS. reads *soone*.—W.

[4] Several collections of fables in the middle ages went under the name of Ysope, or Æsop; so that it would not be easy to point out the one from which this moral aphorism is taken.—W.

[5] Ecclus. xii. 10.

[6] See *ante*, p. 136, note 1.

fore saith a philosophre in this wise: Ther is no wight parfytly trewe to him that he to sore dredeth. And Tullius saith, Ther is no might so gret of eny emperour that longe may endure, but if he have more love of the peple than drede. Thow schalt also eschiewe the counseil of folk that ben dronkelewe, for thay ne can no counseil hyde. For Salamon saith, Ther is no privete ther as regneth dronkenesse. Ye schul also have in suspect the counseil of such folk as counseileth you oon thing prively, and counseile yow the contrarie openly. For Cassiodorie[1] saith, It is a maner sleighte to hindre, whan he schewith to doon oon thing openly, and werkith prively the contrarie. Thou schalt also eschiewe the counseil of wikked folkes; for the book saith, The counselyng of wikked folk is alway ful of fraude.[2] And David[3] saith, Blisful is that man that hath not folwed the counseilyng of wikked men or schrewes. Thow schalt also eschiewe the counseilynge of yong folk, for here counseil is nought rype.

'Now, sire, syn I have schewed yow of what folk ye schul take youre counsail, and of whiche folk ye schullen eschiewe the counseil, now schal I teche yow how ye schul examyne youre counseil after the doctrine of Tullius. In examynyng of youre counceiloures, ye schul considre many thinges. Althirfirst ye schul considre that in thilke thing that thou proposist, and up what thing thou wilt have counseil, that verray trouthe be sayd and considrid; this is to sayn, telle trewely thy tale. For he that saith fals, may not wel be counseled in that cas of which he lyeth. And after this, thou schalt considere the thinges that accorden

[1] A Roman senator and consul. At the command of the Gothic King Theodoric, he wrote a work named *Chronicon Breve*, commencing with the Creation and deduced to the year 519, compiled chiefly from Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Chronicles* of Prosper and Jerom, and Aurelius Victor's *Origin of the Roman Nation*. See *Opera Cassiodori;* Rothomag. These compilations and abridgments were very popular in the middle ages.

[2] Prov. xii. 5. [3] Psalms i. 1.

to that purpos for to do by thy counseil, if resoun accorde thereto, and eek if thy might may accorde thereto, and if the more part and the better part of thy counseilours accorde thereto or noon. Thanne schalt thou considre what thing schal folwe of that consailynge; as hate, pees, werre, grace, profyt, or damage, and many other thinges; and in alle these thinges thou schalt chese the beste, and weyve alle other thinges. Thanne schalt thou considre of what roote engendered is the matier of thy counseil, and what fruyt it may conceve and engendre. Thow schalt also considre al these causes, from whens thai ben sprongen. And whan ye have examined youre counseil, as I have said, and which party is the better and more profitable, and han approved by many wise folk and olde, than schalt thow considere, if thou maist parforme it and make of it a good ende. For resoun wol nought that any man schuld bygynne a thing, but if he mighte parforme it and make therof a good ende; ne no wight schulde take upon him so hevy a charge, that he mighte not bere it. For the proverbe saith, He that moche embrasith destreineth litel. And Catoun[1] seith, Assay to do such thing as thou hast power to doon, lest that thy charge oppresse the so sore, that the bihove to wayve thing that thou hast bygonne. And if so be that thou be in doubte, wher thou maist performe a thing or noon, chese rather to suffre than bygynne. And Petre Alfons saith, If thou hast might to doon a thing, of which thou most repente, it is better nay than yee; this is to sayn, that the is better holde thy tonge stille than to speke. Than may ye understonde by strenger resouns, that if thou hast power to performe a werk, of which thou schalt repente, thanne it is better that

[1] This precept of Cato is in lib. iii., dist. 16:—

'Quod potes, id tentato; operis ne pondere pressus
Succumbat labor, et frustra tentata relinquas.'—T.

thou suffre than bigynne. Wel seyn thay that defenden every wight to assaie thing of which he is in doute, whethir he may performe it or noon. And after whan ye han examyned youre counseil, as I have said biforn, and knowen wel ye may performe youre emprise, conferme it thanne sadly til it be at an ende.

'Now it is tyme and resoun that I schewe yow whanne, and wherfore, that ye may chaunge youre counseil withouten reproef. Sothly, a man may chaunge his purpos and his counseil, if the cause cesseth, or whan a newe cause bytydeth. For the law seith, upon thinges that newely bitydeth, bihoveth newe counseil. And Seneca seith, If thy counseil be comen to the eeres of thin enemy, chaunge thy counsail. Thow maist also chaunge thy counseil, if so be that thou fynde that by errour, or by other processe, harm or damage may bytyde. Also thou chaunge thy counseil, if thy counseil be dishonest, or elles cometh of dishoneste; for the lawes sayn, that alle the hestes that ben dishoneste ben of no valieu; and eek, if it so be that it be impossible, or may not goodly be performed or kept. And take this for a general reule, that every counseil that is affermed or strengthed so strongly that it may not be chaunged for no condicioun that may bitide, I say that thilke counseil is wikked.'

This Melibeus, whan he had herd the doctrine of his wyf dame Prudens, answerde in this wise. 'Dame,' quod he, 'yit as into this tyme ye han wel and covenably taught me, as in general, how I schal governe me in the chesynge and in the withholdynge of my counseiloures; but now wold I fayn ye wolde condescende as in especial, and telleth me what semeth or how liketh yow by oure counseiloures that we han chosen in oure present neede.'

'My Lord,' quod sche, 'I byseke yow in al humblesce, that ye wil not wilfully repplye against my resouns, ne distempre youre herte, though I say or

speke thing that yow displesith; for God woot that, as in myn entent, I speke it for youre beste, for youre honour, and for your profyt eek, and sothly I hope that your benignite wol take it into pacience. For trusteth me wel,' quod sche, 'that youre counseil as in this caas ne schulde not (as for to speke propurly) be called a counseilyng, but a mocioun or a moevynge of foly, in which counseil ye han erred in many a sondry wise. First and forward, ye han erred in the gaderyng of youre counseilours; for ye schulde first han cleped a fewe folkes, if it hadde be neede. But certes ye han sodeinly cleped to your counseil a gret multitude of people, ful chargeous and ful anoyous for to hiere. Also ye han erred, for ther as ye schulde oonly have clepid to youre counseil youre trewe frendes, olde and wise, ye have i-cleped straunge folk, yonge folk, false flaterers, and enemyes reconsiled, and folk that doon yow reverence withoute love. And also ye han erred, for ye han brought with yow to your counseil ire, coveitise, and hastynes, the whiche thre thinges ben contrarious to every counsail honest and profitable; the whiche thre thinges ye have nought annentissched or destroyed, neyther in youre self ne in youre counseiloures, as ye oughte. Also ye have erred, for ye have schewed to youre counseilours youre talent and youre affeccioun to make werre, and for to doon vengeaunce anoon, and thay han espyed by youre wordes to what thinge ye ben enclined; and therfore have thay counseiled yow rather to youre talent than to youre profyt. Ye have erred also, for it semeth that yow sufficeth to have been counseiled by these counseilours only, and with litel avys, wher as in so gret and so heigh a neede, it hadde be necessarious mo counseilours and more deliberacioun to performe youre emprise. Ye have erred also, for ye have maked no divisioun bytwixe youre counseilours; this is to seyn, bitwix youre frendes and youre feyned counseilours; ne ye ne have nought i-knowe the wille of youre frendes, olde

and wise, but ye have cast alle here wordes in an hochepoche, and enclyned youre herte to the more part and to the gretter nombre, and there be ye condescendid; and syn ye wot wel men schal alway fynde a gretter nombre of fooles than of wyse men, and therfore the counsailes that ben at congregaciouns and multitudes of folk, ther as men taken more reward to the nombre than to the sapience of persones, ye se wel that in suche counspilynges fooles have maystrie.'

Melibeus answerde agayn and sayde: 'I graunte wel that I have erred; but ther as thou hast told me to-forn, that he is nought to blame that chaungeth his counseilours in certeyn caas, and for certeyn juste causes, I am al redy to chaunge my counseilours right as thou wilt devyse. The proverbe saith, that for to do synne is mannysch, but certes for to persevere longe in synne is werk of the devyl.'

To this sentence anoon answerde dame Prudens, and saide: 'Examineth,' quod sche, 'youre counsail, and let us se which of hem hath spoke most resonably, and taught you best counsail. And for as moche as the examinacioun is necessarie, let us byginne at the surgiens and at the phisiciens, that first speken in this matiere. I say you that the surgiens and the phisiciens han sayd yow in youre counseil discretly, as hem ought; and in here speche seyden ful wisely, that to the office of hem appendith to doon to every wight honour and profyt, and no wight to annoy, and after here craft to do gret diligence unto the cure of hem which that thay have in here governaunce. And, sire, right as thay answerde wisely and discretly, right so rede I that thay be heighly and soveraignly guerdoned for here noble speche, and eek for thay schullen do the more ententyf besynes in the curyng of youre doughter dere. For al be it so that thai be youre frendes, therfore schul ye nought suffre that thay schul serve yow for nought, but ye oughte the rathere to guerdoune hem and schewe hem youre largesse. And as touchynge the proposiciouns whiche the phisiciens han

schewed you in this caas, this is to sayn, that in maladyes oon contrarie is warisshed by another contrarie, I wolde fayn knowe thilke text and how thay understonde it, and what is youre entente.' 'Certes,' quod Melibeus, 'I understonde it in this wise; that right as thay han do me a contrarie, right so schold I do hem another; for right as thay han venged hem on me and doon me wrong, right so schal I venge me upon hem, and doon hem wrong; and thanne have I cured oon contrarie by another.' 'Lo, lo,' quod dame Prudence, 'how lightly is every man enclyned to his oughne plesaunce and to his oughne desir! Certes,' quod sche. 'the wordes of the phisiciens ne schulde nought have ben understonde sone in that wise; for certes wikkednesse is no contrarie to wickednesse, ne vengauns to vengeaunce, ne wrong to wrong, but thai ben semblable; and therfore a vengeaunce is nought warisshed by another vengeaunce, ne oon wrong by another wrong, but everych of hem encreseth and engreggith other. But certes the wordes of the phisiciens schul ben unstonde in this wise; for good and wikkednesse ben tuo contraries, and pees and werre, vengeaunce and sufferaunce, discord and accord, and many other thinges; but, certes, wikkednes schal be warrisshed by goodnesse, discord by accord, werre by pees, and so forth of other thinges. And herto accordith seint Paul[1] the apostil in many places; he saith, Ne yeldith nought harm, ne wikked speche for wikked speche; but do wel to him that doth the harm, and blesse him that saith the harme. And in many other places he amonesteth pees and accord. But now wil I speke to yow of the counseil, which was give to yow by the men of lawe, and the wise folk, and[2] olde folk, that sayde alle by oon accord as ye have herd byfore, that over alle thinges ye schal do youre diligence to kepe youre

[1] Romans xii. 17.

[2] This and the two following words are omitted in the Harl. MS., and are supplied by Mr. Wright from the original French.

persone, and to warmstore youre house; and seyden also, that in this yow aughte for to wirche ful avysily and with gret deliberacioun. And, sire, as to the firste poynt, that touched to the kepinge of youre persone, ye schul understonde, that he that bath werre, schal evermore devoutly and mekely prayen biforn alle thinges, that Jhesu Crist wil of his mercy have him in his protecciouu, and ben his soverayn helpyng at his neede; far certes in this world ther nys no wight that may be counseiled or kept sufficauntly, withoute the kepinge of oure lord Jhesu Crist. To this sentence accordeth the prophete David,[1] that seith: If God ne kepe not the citee, in ydel wakith he that kepith it. Now, sire, thanne schul ye committe the keping of youre persone to youre trewe frendes, that ben approved and y-knowe, and of hem schul ye axen help, youre persone to kepe. For Catoun[2] saith: If thou have neede of help, axe it of thy freendes, for ther is noon so good a phisicien at neede as is a trewe frend. And after this than schal ye kepe you fro alle straunge folkes, and fro lyeres, and have alway in suspect here compaignye. For Pieres Alfons saith: Ne take no compaignie by the way of a straunge man, but so be that thou knowe him of a lenger tyme; and if so be he falle into thy compaignye paraventure withouten thin assent, enquere thanne, as subtilly as thou maist, of his conversacioun, and of his lyf bifore, and feyne thy way, and say that thou wilt go thider as thou wolt nought goon; and if he bere a spere, hold the on the right syde, and if he bere a swerd, holde the on the lyft syde. And so after this, thanne schul ye kepe you wisely from al such peple as I have sayd bifore, and hem and here counseil eschiewe. And after this, than schul ye

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[1] Psalm cxxvii. 2.

[2] Cato, lib. iv. dist. 14:—

'Auxilium a notis petito, si forte laborus,
Nec quisquam melior medicus quam fidus amicus.'—T.

kepe yow in such manere, that for eny presumpcioun of youre strengthe, that ye despise not the might of youre adversarie so lite, that ye lete the kepinge of youre persone for youre presumpcioun; for every wis man dredeth his enemy. And Salamon saith, Weleful is he that of alle hath drede; for certes he that thurgh hardynes of his herte, and thurgh the hardynesse of himself, hath to gret presumpcioun, him schal evyl bitide. Thanne schal ye evermore counterwayte embusshementz and alle espiaille. For Senec saith, that the wise man that dredith harmes, eschiewith harmes, ne he ne fallith into noone perils, that perils eschieweth. And al be it so that the seme that thou art in siker place, yit schaltow alway do thy diligence in kepyng of thy persone; this is to say, be not necgligent to kepe thy persone, nought oonly for thy gretteste enemyes, but fro thy lest enemyes. Senec saith: A man that is wel avysed, he dredith his lest enemy. Ovide[1] seith, that the litel wesil wol sle the grete bole and the wilde hert. And the book saith, a litel thorn wol prikke a king ful sore, and an hound wol holde the wilde boore. But natheles, I say not that ye schul be so moche a coward, that ye doute where is no neede or drede. The book saith, that som folk have gret lust to disceyve, but yit thay dreden hem to be deceyved. Yet schal ye drede to ben empoisoned. And kepe ye fro the companye of scorners; for the book saith, with scorners make no compaignye, but flee hem and here wordes as venym.

'Now as to the secounde poynt, where as youre wise counseilours warnede yow to warmstore youre hous with gret diligence, I wolde fayn wite how that ye understoode thilke wordes, and what is your sentence.' Melibeus answerde and saide: 'Certes, I understonde

[1] This maxim appears to have been derived at second-hand from some version, for the original is—

'Parva necat morsu spatiosum *vipera* taurum;
A cane non magno sæpe tenetur *aper*.'—*Remedium Amoris*, 421

it in this wise, that I schal warmstore myn hous with toures, suche as han castiles and other maner edifices, and armure, and artilries; by suche thinges I may my persone and myn hous so kepen and edifien and defenden, that myn enemyes schul be in drede myn hous to approche.'

To this sentence answerde dame Prudence: 'Warmstorynge,' quod sche, 'of heihe toures and grete edifices, is with grete costages and grete travaile; and whan that thay ben accomplised, yit beth thay nought worth a straw, but if they be defended by trewe frendes, that beth olde and wise. And understondeth that the grettest strengȝh or garnisoun that the riche man may have, as wel to kepe his persone as his goodes, is that he be biloved with his subgites and with his neighebours. For thus saith Tullius, that ther is a maner garnisoun that no man may vanquisshe ne discomfite, and that is a lord to be biloved with his citezeins and of his peple.

'Now thanne as to youre thridde poynt, where as youre olde and wyse counseillours sayde, ye oughte nought sodeinly ne hastily procede in this neede, but that ye oughte purveyen yow and apparaile yow in this caas with greet diligence and gret deliberacioun; trewely, I trowe, that thay sayden soth and right wisely. For Tullius saith: 'In every nede, er thou bigynne it, apparaile the with gret diligence.' Thanne say I, that in vengeance takinge, in werre, in bataile, and in warmstoringe of thin hous, er thou bygynne, I rede that thou apparaile the therto, and do it with gret deliberacioun. For Tullius saith, that long apparaylyng byfore the bataille maketh schort victorie. And Cassidorus saith, the garnisoun is strenger whan it is long tyme avysed.

'But now let us speke of the counseil that was accorded by youre neighebours, suche as doon you reverence withoute love, youre olde enemyes recounsiled, your flatereres, that counseile yow certeyn thinges

pryvely, and openly counseile yow the contrarie, the yonge also, that counsaile yow to make werre and venge yow anoon. And certes, sire, as I have sayd byforn, ye have gretly erred to have cleped such maner folk to youre counseil, whiche be now repreved by the resouns byfore sayd. But natheles let us now descende to the purpos special. Ye schul first procede after the doctrine of Tullius. Certes, the trouthe of this matier or this counseil nedeth nought diligently enquere, for it is wel wist whiche it ben that doon to yow this trespas and vilonye, and how many trespasoures, and in what maner thay han to yow doon al this wrong and al this vilonye. And after that schal ye examyne the secounde condicioun, which Tullius addith therto in this matier. Tullius put a thing, which that he clepeth consentynge;[1] this is to sayn, who ben thay, and whiche ben thay, and how many, that consentid to this matiere, and to thy counsail in thy wilfulnesse, to do hasty vengeaunces. And let us considere also who ben tho, and how many ben tho, that consenteden[2] to youre adversaries. And certes, as to the first poynt, it is wel knowen whiche folk ben thay that consentid to youre first wilfulnes. For trewly, alle tho that counsailled yow to make sodeyn werre, beth nought youre frendes. Let us considre whiche ben tho that ye holde so gretly youre frendes, as to youre persone; for al be it so that ye be mighty and riche, certes ye been alloone; for certes ye have no childe but a doughter, ne ye have no bretheren, ne cosins germayns, ne noon other neigh kynrede, wherfore that youre enemyes for drede schulden stynte for to plede with you, and struye youre persone. Ye knowe also, that youre richesses mooten in divers parties be departed;

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *covetynge*, by an error of the scribe, as appears by the sequel.—W.

[2] I have restored this reading from the Lansd. MS. and the French original, instead of the reading of the Harl. MS., *that ben counsailours*. —W.

and whan every wight hath his part, thay wol take but litel reward to venge thy deth. But thyne enemyes ben thre, and have many children, bretheren, cosynes, and othere neigh kynrede; and though it so were ye hadde slayn of hem tuo or thre, yet dwellen there y-nowe to wreke here deth and sle thi persone. And though so were that youre kynrede were more sekir and stedefast than the kynrede of youre adversaries, yit natheles youre kynrede nis but a fer[1] kynrede, and litel sib to yow, and the kyn of youre enemyes ben neigh sibbe to hem. And certes, as in that, here condicioun is bet than youres. Thanne let us considere also if the counseilynge of hem that counseiled yow to take sodein vengeance, whethir it accorde to resoun. And certes, ye knowe wel, nay; for as by right and resoun, ther may no man taken vengeaunce upon no wight, but the jugge that hath jurediccioun of it, whan it is y-graunted him to take thilke vengeaunce hastily, or attemperely, as the lawe requireth. And yit moreover of thilke word that Tullius clepith consentynge, thou schalt considre, if thy might and thy power may consente and suffice to thy wilfulnes and to thy counseilours. And certes, thou maist wel say, that nay; for sicurly, as for to speke properly, we may doo no thing but oonly oon thing which we may do rightfully; and certes rightfully may ye take no vengeance, as of youre owne auctorite. Than may ye se that youre power consentith not, ne accordith not, with youre wilfulnesse.

'Let us now examyne the thridde poynt, that Tullius clepeth consequente. Thou schalt understonde, that the vengeance that thou purposiddest for to take, is consequent, and thereof folweth another vengeaunce, peril, and werre, and other damages withoute nombre, of whiche we be not war, as at this tyme.

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[1] This is Tyrwhitt's reading, which seems to agree better with the context than the reading of the Harl. MS., *litel*.—W.

And as touching the fourthe poynt, that Tullius clepeth engendrynge, thou schalt considre that this wrong which that is doon to the, is engendred of the hate of thin enemyes, and of the vengeaunce takinge up that wolde engendre another vengeaunce, and moche sorwe and wastyng of riches, as I sayde. Now, sire, as to the poynt that Tullius clepith causes, whiche that is the laste poynt, thou schalt understonde that the wrong that thou hast receyved hath certeyn causes, whiche that clerkes calle *oriens*, and *efficiens*, and *causa longinqua*, and *causa propinqua*, that is to say, the fer cause, and the neigh cause. For the fer cause is almighty God, that is cause of alle thinges; the nere cause is the thre enemyes; the cause accidental was hate; the causes materiales been the fyve woundes of thy doughter; the cause formal is the maner of here werkyng, that brought in laddres and clombe in at thin wyndowes; the cause final was for to sle thy doughter; it letted nought in as moche as was in hem. But for to speke of the fer cause, as to what ende thay schal come, or what schal finally betyde of hem in this cause, can I not deme, but by conjectyng and by supposyng; for we schul suppose, that thay schul come to a wikked ende, bycause that the book of Decrees saith: Seelden, or with gret peyne, ben causes i-brought to a good ende, whan thay ben evyl bygonne.

'Now, sire, if men wold axe me, why that God suffrede men to do yow this wrong and vilonye, certes I can not wel answere, as for no sothfastnes. For the apostil[1] saith, that the sciences and the juggements of oure Lord God almyghty ben ful deepe, ther may no man comprehende ne serchen hem sufficiauntly. Natheles, by certeyn presumpciouns and conjectinges, I holde and bilieve, that God, which that is ful of justice and of rightwisnesse, hath suffred this to bityde, by just cause resonable. Thy name, Melibe, is

[1] Rom. xi. 33.

to say, a man that drynketh hony. Thou hast y-dronke so moche hony of sweete temperel richesses and delices and honours of this world, that thou art dronke, and hast forgete Jhesu Crist thy creatour; thou hast not doon him such honour and reverence as the oughte to doone, ne thou hast nought wel taken keep to the wordes of Ovid,[1] that saith, Under the hony of thy goodes of thy body is hid the venym that sleeth thi soule. And Salamon[2] saith, If thou have founde hony, ete of it that sufficeth; for if thou ete of it out of mesure, thou schalt spewe, and be nedy and povere. And peraventure Crist hath the in despit, and hath torned away fro the his face and his eeres of misericorde; and also he hath suffred that thou hast ben punysshed in the maner that thou hast i-trespassed. Thou hast doon synne ageinst oure Lord Crist, for certes thi thre enemyes of mankynde, that is to say, thy flessche, the feend, and the world, thou hast y-suffred hem to enter into thin herte wilfully, by the wyndow of thy body, and hast nought defended thiself sufficiently agayns here assautes,[3] and here temptacioums, so that thay have woundid thi soule in fyve places, this is to sayn, the dedly synnes that ben entred into thin herte by thy fyve wittes; and in the same maner oure Lord Crist hath wolde and suffred, that thy thre enemyes ben entred into thin hous by tho wyndowes, and have i-woundid thi doughter in the forsayde maner.'

'Certes,' quod Melibeus, 'I se wel that ye enforce yow moche by wordes to overcome me, in such manere, that I schal not venge me on myn enemyes, schewynge me the perils and the yveles that mighten falle of this

[1] Mr. Wright concludes that the allusion is to Ovid, *Amor.*, lib. i., eleg. viii. 104:—

'Impia sub dulci melle venena latent.'

[2] Prov. xxv. 16.

[3] The Harl. MS. reads *ascentis*, and the Lansd. MS. *defautes*. The eading here adopted from Tyrwhitt is authorised by the French orinal, which has *assaux*.—W.

vengeaunce. But who so wolde considre in alle vengeaunces the periles and the yveles that mighten folwe of vengeaunces takynge, a man wolde never take vengeaunce, and that were harm; for by vengeaunce takynge be wikked men destruyed and dissevered fro the goode men. And thay that have wille to wikkednes, restreignen here wikked purpos, whan thay seen the punysshyng and the chastisyng of trespasours.

'And yit[1] say I more, that right so as a sengle persone synneth in taking of vengeaunce, right so the jugge synneth if he doo no vengeaunce of him that it hath deserved. For Senec saith thus: That maister, he saith, is good that reproveth schrewes.[2] And as Cassoder saith: A man dredeth to doon outrage, whan he woot and knoweth that it displeseth to the jugges and the soveraynes. And another saith: The jugge that dredeth to demen right, maketh schrewes. And seint Poul thappostoil saith in his epistil, whan he writeth to the Romayns:[3] The jugges bere not the spere withoute cause, but the beren it to punysshe the schrewes and mysdoers, and for to defende with the goode men. If ye wol take vengeaunce on youre enemyes, ye schul retourne or have recours to the jugges, that have juredicioun upon hem, and he schal punissche hem, as the law axeth and requireth.' 'Ah!' quod Melibeus, 'this vengeaunce liketh me no thing. I bythenke me now, and take heed, how Fortune hath norissched me fro my childhode, and hath

[1] The commencement of this paragraph, which is very necessary for the sense, is not found in Chaucer's translation in any of the MSS. In the French original it stands thus:—'Et à ce respont dame Prudence, 'Certes,' dist-elle, 'je t'octroye que de vengence vient molt de maulx et de biens, mais vengence n'appartient pas à un chascun, fors seulement aux juges, et à ceux qui ont la juridiction sur les malfaitteurs. Et dit plus que,'' &c.—W.

[2] I give this reading, adopted by Tyrwhitt, instead of that of the Harl. MS., *He that maister is, he saith good to reprove schrewes*; which neither offers any apparent sense, nor represents the French original, Car Senesque dit, Cellui nuit aux bons qui espargne les mauvis.'—W.

[3] Rom. xiii. 4.

holpe me to passen many a strayt passage; now wol I ask her that sche schal, with Goddes help, helpe me my schame for to venge.'

'Certes,' quod Prudence, 'if ye wil wirche by my counseil, ye schul not assaye Fortune by no maner way, ne schul not lene ne bowe unto hire, after the word of Senec; for thinges that beth folly, and that beth in hope of Fortune, schul never come to good ende. And as the same Senek saith: The more cleer and the more schynynge that Fortune is, the more brutil, and the sonner breketh sche. So trusteth nought in hire, for sche is nought stedefast ne stable: for whan thou wenest or trowest to be most seur of hir help, sche wol fayle and deceyve the. And wher as ye say, that Fortune hath norisshed yow fro youre childhode, I say that in so mochel ye schul the lasse truste in hire and in hire witte. For Senek saith: What man that is norisshed by Fortune, sche maketh him a gret fool. Now siththe ye desire and axe vengeaunce, and the vengeaunce that is doon after the lawe and byforne the jugge ne liketh yow nought, and the vengeaunce that is doon[1] in hope of Fortune, is perilous and uncerteyn, than haveth ye noon other remedye, but for to have recours unto the soveraigne jugge, that veugith alle vilonies and wronges; and he schal venge yow, after that himself witnesseth, where as he saith: Leveth the vengeaunce to me, and I schal yelde it.'[2] Melibeus answerd: 'If I ne venge me nought of the vilonye that men have doon unto me, I schal sonnere warne hem that han doon to me that vilonye, and all othere, to doo me another vilonye. For it is writen: If thou tak no vengeaunce of an old vilonye, thou somnest thin adversarie do the a newe vilonye. And also, for my suffraunce, men wolde do

[1] These words are omitted in the Harl. MS. by an evident error of the scribe, who skipped from the first *doon* to the second. They have their representative in the original French, and are here given from the Lansd. MS.—W.

[2] Rom. xii. 19.

me so moche vilonye, that I mighte neither bere it ne susteyne it; and so schulde I be put over lowe. For men say, in moche sufferynge schal many thinges falle unto the, whiche thou schalt nought nowe suffre.' 'Certes,' quod Prudence, 'I graunte yow wel, that over mochel suffraunce is nought good, but yit folwith it nought thereof, that every persone to whom men doon vilonye, take of it vengeaunce. For it appertieneth and longeth al oonly to the jugges, for thay schul venge the vilonyes and injuries; and therfore the auctoritees that ye have sayd above been oonly understonden in the jugges; for whan thay suffre to mochil the wronges and the vilonyes that ben doon withoute punysshyng, thay somne not a man oonly to doo newe wronges, but thay comaunde it. Also the wise man saith: The jugge that correcteth not the synnere, comaundith and byddith him doon another synne. And the jugges and sovereignes mighten in here lond so mochil suffren of the schrewes and mysdoeres, that thay schulde by such suffraunce, by proces of tyme, wexen of such power and might, that thay schulde put out the jugges and the sovereignes from here places, and atte laste do hem lese here lordschipes. But lete us now putte, that ye han leve to venge yow; I say ye ben nought of might ne power as now to venge you; for if ye wolde make comparisoun as to the might of youre adversaries, ye schulde fynde in many thinges, that I have i-schewed yow er this, that here condicioun is bettre than youres, and therfore say I, that it is good as now, that ye suffre and be pacient.

'Forthermore ye knowe that after the comune sawe, it is a woodnesse, a man to stryve with a strenger or a more mighty man than him selven is; and for to stryve with a man of evene strengthe, that is to say, with as strong a man as he is, it is peril; and for to stryve with a weykere, it is a folye; and therfore schulde a man fle stryvynge as moche as he

mighte. For Salamon[1] seith: It is a gret worschipe, a man to kepe him fro noyse and stryfe. And if it so bifalle or happe that a man of gretter might and strengthe than thou art do the grevaunce, studie and busie the rather to stille the same grevaunce, than for to venge the. For Senec saith, he putteth him in a gret peril that stryveth with a gretter man than he him selven is. And Catoun[2] saith: If a man of heiher estat or degre, or more mighty then thou, do the anoye or grevaunce, suffre him; for he that hath oones don the a grievaunce, may another tyme relieve the and helpe the.

'Yit sette I a caas, ye have both might and licence for to venge yow, I say ther ben ful many thinges that schulde restreinge yow of vengeaunce takynge, and make you to encline to suffre, and to have pacience of the wronges that han ben doon to yow. First and forward, ye wol considere the defautes that ben in youre owne persone, for which defautes God hath suffred yow to have this tribulacioun, as I have sayd yow herbyfore. For the poete saith, We oughten paciently to suffre the tribulacioun that cometh to us, whan that we thenken and consideren, that we han deserved to have hem. And seint Gregorie[3] saith, that whan a man considereth wel the nombre of his defautes, and of his synnes, the peynes and the tribulaciouns that he suffereth semen the lasse unto him. And in as moche as him thenkith his synnes the more hevy and grevous, in so moche his peyne is the lighter and the more esier unto him. Also ye oughten to encline and bowe youre herte, to take the pacience of

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[1] Prov. xx. 3.

[2] This prudent advice is from Cato, lib. iv. dist. 40:—

'Cede locum læsus, fortunæ cede potento [potentis];
Lædere qui potuit, prodesse aliquando valebit.'—T.

[3] Saint Gregory. See *Persones Tale*. It would be endless to verify the quotations from the Fathers in this and *The Persones Tale*, and out of place in a work like this, which is not a controversial treatise.

oure Lord Jhesu Christ, as saith seint Peter[1] in his Epistles. Jhesu Christ, he seith, hath suffred for us, and given ensample unto every man to folwe and sewe him; for he dede never synne, ne never cam vileyns worde out of his mouth. Whan men cursed him, he cursed hem not; and whan men beete him, he manased hem not. Also the gret pacience which that seintes that been in Paradys han had in tribulaciouns that thay have had and suffred withoute desert or gult, oughte moche to stire you to pacience. Forthermore, ye schuld enforce yow to have pacience, consideringe that the tribulaciouns of this world but litel while enduren, and soon passed ben and goon, and the joye that a man secheth to have by pacience in tribulaciouns is perdurable; after that the apostil[2] seith in his Epistil: the joye of God, he saith, is perdurable, that is to say, evermore lastynge. Also troweth and believeth stedefastly, that he is not wel norisched and taught, that can nought have pacience, or wil nought receyve pacience. For Salamon saith,[3] that the doctrine and the witte of a man is i-knowe by pacience. And in another place he seith: He that hath pacience governeth him by gret prudence. And the same Salamon seith, that the wrathful and the angry man maketh noyses, and the pacient man attempereth and stilleth him. He seith also: It is more worth to be pacient than for to be right strong. And he that may have his lordschipe of his oughne herte, is more worth and more to preise than he that by his force and by his strengthe taketh grete cítees. And therfore saith seint Jame[4] in his Epistil, that pacience is a gret vertu of perfeccioun.'

'Certes,' quod Melibeus, 'I graunte yow, dame Prudence, that pacience is a grete vertue of perfeccioun;[5] but every man may not have the perfeccioun

[1] 1 Peter ii. 21. [2] 2 Cor. iv. 17.
[3] Prov. xvi. 32. [4] James i. 4.
[5] From *certes* to *perfection*. These words have been omitted by the

that ye sckyn, ne I am not of the nombre of right parfyte men; for myn herte may never be in pees, unto the tyme it be venged. And al be it so, that it was a gret peril to myne enemyes to don me a vilonye in takinge vengeaunce upon me, yit tooken thay noon heede of the peril, but fulfilden here wikked desir and her corrage; and therfore me thenketh men oughten nought repreve me, though I putte me in a litel peril for to venge me, and though I do a gret excesse, that is to say, that I venge oon outrage by another.'

'A!' quod dame Prudence, 'ye say youre wille and as yow likith; but in noon caas in the world a man ne schulde nought doon outrage ne excesse for to venge him. For Cassidore saith, as evel doth he that avengith him by outrage, as he that doth the outrage. And therfore ye schul venge yow after the ordre of right, that is to sayn, by the lawe, and nought by excesse, ne by outrage. And also if ye wil venge yow of the outrage of youre adversaries, in other maner than right comaundeth, ye synnen. And therfore saith Senec, that a man schal never venge schrewednes by schrewednes. And if ye say that right axeth a man to defende violence by vyolence, and fightyng by fightynge; certes, ye say soth, whan the defence is doon anoon withouten intervalle, or withouten taryinge or dilay, for to defenden him, and nought for to venge him. And it bihoveth a man putte such attemperance in his defence, that men have no cause ne matiere to repreven him that defendith him, of excesse and outrage. Parde! ye knowe wel, that ye make no defence as now for to defende yow, but for to venge yow; and so semeth it, that ye have no wille to do youre wille attemperelly; and therfore me thenkith that pacience is good. For Salamon[1] saith, that he

scribe of the Harl. MS., whose eye ran on from the word *perfecciouu* which closes the preceding paragraph to the words *but every man*, &c. They are here restored from the Lansd. MS.—W.

[1] Eccius. ii. 16.

that is not pacient schal have gret harm.' 'Certes,' quod Melibeus, 'I graunte you wel, that whan a man is impacient and wroth of that that toucheth him nought, and that apperteineth nought to him, though it harme him it is no wonder.[1] For the lawe saith, that he is coupable that entremettith him or mellith him with such thing, as aperteyneth not unto him. Dan Salamon saith,[2] He that entremetteth him of the noyse or stryf of another man, is lik him that takith the straunge hound[3] by the eeres; for right as he that takith a straunge hound by the eeres is other while biten with the hound, right in the same wise, it is resoun that he have harm, that by his impacience melleth him of the noise of another man, where it aperteyneth not to him. But ye schul knowe wel, that this dede, that is to sayn, myn disease and my grief, toucheth me right neigh. And therfore, though I be wroth, it is no mervayle; and (savynge your grace) I can not see that it mighte gretly harme me, though I take vengeaunce, for I am richer and more mighty than myne enemyes been; and wel knowe ye, that by money and by havynge of grete possessiouns, ben alle the thinges of this world governede. And Salamon saith,[4] that alle thinges obeyen to moneye.'

[5]Whan Prudence had herd hire housbond avaunte him of his richesse and of his moneye, dispraisynge the power of his adversaries, tho sche spak and sayde in this wyse: 'Certes, deere sire, I graunte yow that ye ben riche and mighty, and that richesse is good to hem

[1] *Of that . . . no wonder.* This passage is omitted in the Harl. MS., but it is restored from the Lansd. MS., supported by the French original.—W.

[2] Prov. xxvi. 17.

[3] The word *straunge* is omitted in the Harl. and Lansd. MSS., the latter of which is somewhat confused here. It is, however, evidently necessary; the French has 'le chien qui ne congnoist.' In the next line the Harl. MS. reads *the strong hound.*—W.

[4] Eccles. x. 19.

[5] *Whan Prudence . . . his moneye.* This is also omitted in the Harl. MS. by an oversight of the scribe, who passed on from the word *moneye* at the end of the preceding paragraph.—W.

that wel have geten it, and that wel conne use it. For right as the body of a man may not be withoute the soule, no more may a man lyve withoute temperel goodes, and by richesse may a man gete him greet frendschipe. And therfore saith Pamphilles:[1] If a neethurdes doughter, he saith, be riche, sche may cheese of a thousand men, which she wol take to hir housbonde; for of a thousand men oon wil not forsake hir ne refuse hire. And this Pamphilles seith also: If thou be right happy, that is to sayn, if thou be right riche, thanne schalt thou fynde a gret nombre of felawes and frendes; and if thy fortune chaunge, that thou waxe pore, fare wel frendschipe, for thou schalt ben aloone withouten eny companye, but if it be the compaignye of pore folk. And yit saith this Pamphillus moreover, that they that ben thral and bonde of linage, schullen ben maad worthy and noble by richesse. And right so as by richesse ther come many goodes, right so by povert comen ther many harmes and yvels; for grete poverte constreigneth a man to doon many yvels.[2] And therfore clepeth Cassidore povert the moder of[3] ruyne, that is to sayn, the moder of overthrowyng or fallynge doun. And therfore saith Pieres Alphons: Oon of the grettest adversites of this world, is whan a freeman by kyn or burthe is constreigned by povert to eten the almes of his enemyes. And the same seith Innocent[4] in oon of his bookes, that sorweful and unhappy is the condicioun of a povere begger, for if he axe nought his mete, he deyeth for hungir, and if he axe, he deyeth for schame; and

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[1] *Pamphilus*, Bod. MS., 3703:—

'Dummodo sit dives *cujusdam nata bubulci*,
Eligit e mille quemlibet illa virum.'—T.

[2] *And yvels . . . many yvels.* The passage, omitted in the Harl. MS., is restored from the Lansd. MS.—W.

[3] *The moder of.* These three words are omitted in the Harl. MS. by an oversight of the scribe. The original is *mere des crismes*.—W.

[4] Probably Pope Innocent III., who succeeded to the chair and policy of Gregory VII.

algates the necessite constreigneth hym to axe. And therfore saith Salamon,[1] that bettre is it to dey, than to have such povert. And as the same Salamon saith: Bettir is to deye on bitter deth, than for to lyve in such a wyse.

'By these resouns that I have sayd unto yow, and by many another resoun that I know and couthe say, I graunte yow that richesses ben goode to hem that gete hem wel, and to hem that hem wel usen; and therfore wol I schewe yow how ye schulde bere yow in getyng of riches, and in what maner ye schulde use hem. First, ye schulde gete hem withoute gret desir, by good leysir, sokyngly, and nought over hastily; for a man that is to desirynge for to gete riches, abandoneth him first to thefte and to alle othere yveles. And therfore saith Salamon:[2] He that hastith him to bisyly to waxe riche, schal ben noon innocent. He saith also, that the riches that hastily cometh to a man, soone and lightly goth and passeth fro a man, but that richesse that cometh alway litel and litel, waxeth alway and multiplieth. And, sire, ye schal gete richesse by youre witte, and by youre travayle, unto youre profyt, and that withoute wrong or harm doynge to eny other persone. For the lawe saith, that na man maketh him self riche, that doth harm to another wight; that is to say, that nature defendeth and forbedith by right, that no man make him self riche unto the harm of another persone. Tullius saith, that no sorwe ne drede of deth, ne no thing that may falle to a man, is so moche ageinst nature, as a man to encresce his oughne profyt to the harm of another man. And though the grete men and the riche men gete richesse more lightly than thou, yit schalt thou not be ydil ne slowe to thy profyt, for thou schalt in alle wise flee ydilnes. For Salamon saith,[3] that ydel-

[1] Prov. xv. 15; Ecclus. xxx. 17.
[2] Prov. xxviii. 22.
[3] Prov. xix. 15.

nesse techith a man to do many yveles. And the same Salamon saith, that he that travaileth and besieth him to tilye the lond, schal ete breed; but he that is ydil, and casteth him to no busynesse ne occupacioun, schal falle into povert, and deye for hunger. And he that is ydel and slough, can never fynde him tyme for to do his profyt. For ther is a versifiour saith, the ydel man excuseth him in wynter, bycause of the grete colde, and in somer by enchesoun of the grete hete. For these causes, saith Catoun, waketh,[1] and enclineth yow nought over moche for to slepe, for over moche reste norischeth and causeth many vices. And therfore saith seint Jerom:[2] Doth some goode deedes, that the devel, which that is oure enemy, ne fynde yow unoccupied; for the devel ne takith not lightly unto his werkes suche as he fyndeth occupied in goode werkes. Thanne thus in getynge of riches ye moot flee ydelnesse. And afterward ye schul use the richesses, the whiche ye han geten by youre witte and by youre travaile, in such a maner, that men holde yow not skarce ne to sparynge, ne to fool large, that is to say, over large a spender. For right as men blamen an averous man, bycause of his skarsete and chyncherie, in the same manere is he to blame, that spendeth over largely. And therfore saith Catoun: Use, he saith, thi richesses that thou hast y-geten in such a manere, that men have no matier ne cause to calle the neither wrecche ne chynche; for it is gret schame to a man to have a pover herte and a riche purse. He saith also: The goodes that thou hast i-geten, use hem by mesure, that is to say, spende hem mesurably; for thay that folily wasten and spenden the goodes that thay have, whan thay have no more propre of here oughne, thay schape hem to take the goodes of another man. I say thanne ye schul flee

[1] I can find nothing nearer to this in Cato than *Scquitiem fugito.*—T.
[2] St. Jerome. See *The Persones Tale.*

avarice, usynge your richesse in such menere, that men seyn nought that youre richesse[1] be buried, but that ye have hem in youre might and in youre weldynge. For the wise man reproveth the averous man, and saith thus in tuo versus: Wherto and why burieth a man his goodes by his gret avarice, and knowith wel, that needes most he deye, for deth is the ende of every man, as in this present lif? And for what cause or enchesoun joyneth he him, or knetteth him so fast unto his goodes, that alle his wittes mowe nought dissever him, or departe him fro his goodes, and knowith wel, or oughte knowe wel, that whan he is deed, he schal no thing bere with him out of this world? And therfore seith seint Austyn, that the averous man is likned unto helle, that the more that it swolwith, the more it desireth to swolwe and devoure. And as wel as ye wolde eschewe to be cleped an averous man or chinche, as wel schulde ye kepe yow and governe yow, in such a wise, that men clepe yow nought fool large. Therfore saith Tullius: The goodes, he saith, of thin hous schulde nought ben hidde ne kepte so clos, but that thay might ben opened by pite and by bonairete; that is to sayn, to give hem part that han gret neede; ne thy goodes schul not be so open, to be every mannes goodes.

'Aftirward, in getynge of youre richesses, and in usynge hem, ye schul alway have thre thinges in youre herte, that is to say, oure lord God, conscience, and good name. First, ye schul have God in youre herte, and for no riches ye schul in no manere doo no thing which might displese God that is your creatour and youre maker. For after the word of Salamon,[2] it is better to have litil good with love of God, than to have mochil good and tresor, and lese the love of his

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[1] *Men seyn nought that youre richesse.* These words, omitted in the Harl. MS. are restored from the Lansd. MS.—W.

[2] Prov. xv. 16.

lord God. And the prophete saith:[1] Better is to ben a good man, and have litel good and tresore, than to ben holden a schrewe, and have gret riches. And yit say I forthermore, that ye schuln alway doon youre businesse to gete yow riches, so that ye gete hem with good conscience. And the apostil seith,[2] ther nys thing in this world of which we schuln have so gret joye, as whan oure conscience bereth us good witnes. And the wise man saith: The substaunce of a man is ful good, whan synne is not in his conscience. Afterward, in getynge of youre richesses, and in usynge of hem, you most have gret busynesse and gret diligence, that youre good name be alway kept and conserved. For Salamon saith:[3] Better it is, and more aveylith a man, for to have a good name, than for to have gret riches. And therfore he saith[4] in another place: Do gret diligence, saith Salamon, in kepynge of thy frend, and of thy good name, for it schal lenger abyde with the, than eny tresor, be it never so precious. And certes, he schulde nought be cleped a gentil man, that after God and good conscience, alle thinges left, ne doth his diligence and busynesse to kepe his good name. And Cassidore saith, that it is signe of a good man and a gentil, or of a gentil herte, whan a man loveth or desireth to have a good name. And therefore saith seint Augustyn, that ther ben tuo thinges that ben necessarie and needful; and that is good conscience and good loos; that is to sayn, good conscience in thin oughne persone in-ward, and good loos of thin neghebor out-ward. And he that trusteth him so moche in his good conscience, that he despiseth and settith at nought his good name or loos, and rekketh nought though he kepe not his good name, nys but a cruel churl.

'Sire, now have I schewed yow how ye schulde

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[1] Psalm xxxvii. 16.
[2] 2 Cor. i. 12.
[3] Prov. xxii. 1.
[4] Ecclus. xli. 12.

doon in getyng of good and riches, and how ye schulde use hem; I see wel that for the trust that ye have in youre riches, ye wolde meve werre and bataile. I counseile yow that ye bygynne no werre in trust of youre riches, for thay suffisen not werres to mayntene. And therfore saith a philosophre: That man that desireth and wol algate have werre, schal never have sufficeaunce; for the richere that he is, the gretter dispenses most he make, if he wol have worschipe or victorie. And Salamon saith:[1] The gretter riches that a man hath, the moo despendours he hath. And, deere sire, al be it so that for youre riches ye mowe have moche folk, yit byhoveth it not ne it is not good to bygynne werre, ther as ye may in other maner have pees unto youre worschipe and profyt; for the victorie of batailles that ben in this world, lith not in gret nombre or multitude of poeple, ne in vertu of man, but it lith in the wille and in the hond of oure lord God almighty. And Judas Machabeus,[2] which was Goddes knight, whan he schulde fighte ageinst his adversaries, that hadde a gretter nombre and a gretter multitude of folk and strengere than was the poeple of this Machabe, yit he reconforted his litel poeple, and sayde ryght in this wise: As lightly, quod he, may oure lord God almighty give victory to fewe folk, as to many folk;[3] for the victorie of batailles cometh nought by the grete nombre of poeple, but it cometh fro oure lord God of heven. And, dere sire, for as moche as ther is no man certeyn, if it be worthi that God give him victorie or nought, after that that Salamon saith, therfore every man schulde gretly drede werres to bygynne. And bycause that in batailles falle many mervayles and periles, and happeth other while, that as soone is the grete man slayn as the litel

[1] Eccius. xiv. 4. [2] 1 Maccab. iii. 18, 19.

[3] *As to many folk.* These words are omitted in the Harl. MS., evidently by a mere oversight of the scribe.—W.

man; and, as it is writen in the secounde book of Kynges,[1] the deedes of batayles be aventurous, and no thing certeyn, for as lightly is oon hurt with a spere as another; and for ther is gret peril in werre, therfore schulde a man flee and eschewe werre in as moche as a man may goodly. For Salamon saith: He that loveth peril, schal falle in peril.'

After that dame Prudens hadde spoke in this maner, Melibe answerde and sayde: 'I se wel, dame, that by youre faire wordes and by youre resouns, that ye have schewed me, that the werre liketh yow no thing; but I have not yit herd youre counseil, how I schall doo in this neede.' 'Certes,' quod sche, 'I counseile yow that ye accorde with youre adversaries, and that ye have pees with hem. For seint Jame[2] saith in his Epistles, that by concord and pees, the smale ryches wexen grete, and by debaat and discord the gret richesses fallen doun. And ye knowe wel, that oon of the moste grettest and soveraign thinges that is in this world, is unite and pees. And therfore saith oure lord Jhesu Crist[3] to his aposteles in this wise: Wel happy and blessed be thay that loven and purchacen pees, for thay ben called children of God.'[4] 'A!' quod Melibe, 'now se I wel, that ye loven not myn honour, ne my worschipe. Ye knowe wel that myne adversaries han bygonne this debate and brige by here outrage, and ye see wel that thay require ne praye me not of pees, ne thay askyn nought to be recounsield; wol ye thanne that I goo and meke me unto hem, and crie hem mercy? For sothe that were not my worschipe; for right as men seyn, that over gret pryde engendreth dispisyng, so fareth it by to gret humblete or mekenes.' Thanne bygan dame Prudence to make semblant of

[1] 1 Sam. xvii. 47. Called in the *Vulgate* 1 Kings.
[2] The only place in St. James at all like this is iii. 15.
[3] Matt. v. 9.
[4] The Harl. MS. reads *Crist*; but *God* is the reading of the Lansd. MS., and agrees best with Scripture.

wraththe, and sayde: 'Certes, sire, save youre grace, I love youre honour and youre profyt as I doo myn owne, and ever have doon; ye ne mowe noon other seyn; and yit if I hadde sayd, ye scholde have purchaced pees and the reconciliacioun, I ne hadde not moche mystake in me, ne seyd amys. For the wise man saith: The discencioun bigynneth by another man, and the reconsilynge bygynneth by thy self. And the prophete saith:[1] Flee schame and schrewednesse and doo goodnesse; seeke pees and folwe it, as moche as in the is. Yet seith he not, that ye schul rather pursewe to youre adversaries for pees, than thei schul to yow; for I knowe wel that ye be so hard-herted, that ye wil doo no thing for me; and Salamon saith:[2] He that is over hard-herted, atte laste he schal myshappe and mystyde.'

Whan Melibé had seyn dame Prudence make semblaunce of wraththe, he sayde in this wise: 'Dame, I pray yow that ye be not displesed of thinges that I say, for ye knoweth wel that I am angry and wroth, and that is no wonder; and thay that ben wroth, wot not wel what thay doon, ne what thay say. Therfore the prophete saith, that troublit eyen have no cleer sight. But sayeth and counsaileth me forth as yow liketh, for I am redy to doo right as ye wol desire. And if ye reprove me of my folye, I am the more holde to love yow and to prayse yow. For Salamon saith,[3] that he that repreveth him that doth folie, he schal fynde gretter grace than he that deceyveth him by swete wordes.' Thanne sayde dame Prudens: 'I make no semblant of wraththe ne of anger, but for youre grete profyt. For Salamon saith:[4] He is more worth that reproveth or chydeth a fool for his folie, schewynge him semblant of wraththe, than he that supporteth him and prayseth him in his mysdoyng,

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[1] Psalm xxxiv. 14.
[2] Prov. xxviii. 14.
[3] Prov. xxviii. 23.
[4] Ibid.

and laugheth at his folie. And this same Salamon saith[1] afterward, that by the sorweful visage of a man, that is to sayn, by sory and hevy countenaunce of a man, the fool corretteth himself and amendeth.' Thanne sayde Melibeus: 'I schal not conne answere to so many faire resouns as ye putten to me and schewen; sayeth schortly youre wille and youre counseil, and I am al redy to fulfille and perfourme it.'

Thanne dame Prudence discovered al hire counsail and hire will unto him and sayde: 'I counseile yow,' quod sche, 'above alle thinges, that ye make pees bitwen God and yow, and beth reconsiled unto him and to his grace; for as I have sayd yow herbiforn, God hath suffred yow have this tribulacioun and disease[2] for youre synnes; and if ye do as I say yow, God wol sende youre adversaries unto yow, and make hem falle at youre feet, al redy to doo youre wille and youre comaundment. For Salamon saith:[3] Whan the condicioun of man is plesant and likyng to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries, and constreigneth hem to biseke him of pees and of grace. And I pray yow let me speke with youre adversaries in prive place, for thay schul not knowe it by youre wille or youre assent; and thanne, whan I knowe here wille and here entent, I may counseile yow the more seurly.'

'Dame,' quod Melibeus, 'doth youre wille and youre likyng, for I putte me holly in youre disposicioun and ordinaunce.' Thanne dame Prudence, whan sche seih the good wille of hir housbond, sche delibered and took avis by hir self, thenkynge how sche mighte bringe this neede unto good conclusioun and to a good ende. And whan sche saugh hire tyme, sche sente for these adversaries to come unto hire into a prive place, and schewed wysly unto hem the grete goodes that

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[1] Eccles. vii. 3.

[2] *Tribulacioun and disease.* The Harl. MS. omits the two first words, which are given from the Lansd. MS. The French original has *ceste tribulacion* only.—W.

[3] Prov. xvi. 7.

comen of pees, and the grete harmes and perils that ben in werre; and sayde to hem, in goodly manere, how that hem aughte to have gret repentaunce of the injurie and wrong that thay hadde doon to Melibe hire lord, and unto hire and hire doughter. And whan thay herden the goodly wordes of dame Prudence, they were tho surprised and ravyssched, and hadden so gret joye of hire, that wonder was to telle. 'A! lady,' quod thay, 'ye have schewed unto us the blessyng of swetnes, after the sawe of David the prophete; for the recounsilyng, which we be nought worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten require it with gret contricioun and humilite, ye of youre grete goodnes have presented unto us. Now we se wel, that the science of Salamon[1] is ful trewe: he saith, that swete wordes multiplien and encrescen frendes, and maken schrewes to ben debonaire and meke. Certes,' quod thay, 'we putten oure deede, and al oure matier and cause, al holly in youre good wille, and ben redy to obeye to the speche and to the comaundement of my lord Melibe. And therfore, deere and benigne lady, we pray yow and byseke yow, as meekely as we conne and may, that it like to yowre grete goodnes to fulfille in deede yowre goodliche wordes. For we considere and knowleche wel that we have offended and greved my lord Melibe out of resoun and out of mesure, so ferforth that we ben nought of power to make his amendes; and therfore we oblie us and bynde us and oure frendes, for to doo al his wille and his comaundmentz. But peraventure he hath such hevynes and such wraththe to usward, bycause of oure offence, that he wol enjoyne us such peyne as we mow not bere ne susteyne; and therfore, noble lady, we biseke to youre wommanly pite to take such avysement in this neede, that we, ne oure frendes, ben not disherited and destroyed thurgh oure folye.' 'Certes,' quod dame

[1] Ecclus. vi. 5.

Prudence, 'it is an hard thing, and right a perilous, that a man put him al outrely in the arbitracioun and juggement and the might and power of his enemyes. For Salamon saith:[1] Leeveth and giveth credence to that that I schal say: I say, quod he, geve[2] poeple and governours of holy chirche; to thy sone, to thi wyf, to thy frend, ne to thy brother, ne geve thou never might ne maystry of thy body, whil thou lyvest. Now, sith he defendith that a man schulde not give to his brother, ne to his frend, the might of his body, by a strenger resoun he defendeth and forbedith a man to give his body to his enemye. But natheles, I counseile yow that ye mystruste nought my lord; for I wot wel and knowe verraily, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteys, and no thing desirous ne coveytous of good ne richesse: for there is no thing in this world that he desireth, save oonly worschipe and honour. Forthermore I knowe, and am right seure, that he wol no thing doo in this neede withoute counsail of me; and I schal so worche in this cause, that by the grace of oure lord God ye schul be recounsiled unto us.' Thanne sayde thay, with oon voys: 'Worschipful lady, we putte us and oure goodes al fully in youre wille and disposicioun, and ben redy to come, what day that it like yow and unto youre noblesse to limite us or assigne us, for to make oure obligacioun and bond, as strong as it liketh to youre goodnes, that we mowe fulfille the wille of yow and of my lord Melibe.' Whan dame Prudence had herd the answeres of thise men, sche bad hem go agayn pryvely, and sche retourned to hir lord Melibe, and tolde him how sche fond his adversaries ful repentant, knowlechinge ful lowely here synnes and trespasses, and how thay were redy to suffre alle peyne, requiring and praying him of mercy and pite.

[1] Eccles. xxxiii. 19.

[2] The word *ear* appears to be omitted after *geve*. The original is Diez moi, destil, tou ‹peuples,' &c.

Thanne saide Melibeus, 'He is wel worthy to have pardoun and forgevenes of his synne, that excusith not his synne, but knowlecheth and repentith him, axinge indulgence. For Senek saith: Ther is the remissioun and forgevenesse, wher as the confessioun is; for confessioun is neighebor to innocence. And he saith in another place, He that hath schame of his synne, knowlechith it. And therfore I assente and conferme me to have pees, but it is good that we doo it nought withoute assent and the wille of oure frendes.' Thanne was Prudence right glad and jolyf, and sayde: 'Certes, sire,' quod sche, 'ye ben wel and goodly avysed; for right as by the counsail and assent and help of youre frendes, ye have be stired to venge yow and make werre, right so withoute here counseil schul ye nought acorde yow ne have pees with youre adversaries. For the lawe saith: Ther nys no thing so good by way of kinde, as thing to be unbounde by him that it was bounde.' And thanne dame Prudence, withoute delay or taryinge, sente anoon messageres for here kyn and for here olde frendes, whiche that were trewe and wyse; and tolde hem by ordre, in the presence of Melibe, of this matier, as it is above expressed and declared; and praide hem that thay wolde give here avys and counseil what best were to doon in this matiere. And whan Melibeus frendes hadde take here avys and deliberacioun of the forsayde matier, and hadden examyned it by greet besynes and gret diligence, they gafe him ful counsail to have pees and reste, and that Melibeus schulde with good hert resceyve his adversaries to forgivenes and mercy.

And whan dame Prudence had herd thassent of hir lord Melibeus, and counseil of his frendes accorde with hire wille and hire entencioun, sche was wonderly glad in herte, and sayde: 'Ther is an olde proverbe that saith, the goodnesse that thou maist do this day abyde not ne delaye it nought unto to morwe; and therfore

I counseile yow ye sende youre messageres, whiche that ben discrete and wise, unto youre adversaries, tellynge hem on youre bihalve, that if thay wol trete of pees and of accord, that thay schape hem withoute dilay or taryinge to come unto us.' Which thing was parformed in dede; and whan these trespasours and repentynge folk of here folies, that is to sayn, the adversaries of Melibè, hadden herd what the messangeres sayden unto hem, thay were right glad and jolif, and answerden ful mekely and benignely, yeldynge graces and thankynges to here lord Melibe, and to al his compaignye; and schope hem withoute delay to go with the messangeres, and obeye hem to the comaundement of here lord Melibe. And right anoon thay token here way to the court of Melibe, and token with hem some of here trewe frendes, to make faith for hem, and for to ben here borwes. And whan thay were comen to the presence of Melibeus, he seyde hem thise wordes: 'It stondith thus,' quod Melibeus, 'and soth it is, that ye causeles, and withouten skile and resoun, have doon gret injuries and wronges to me, and to my wyf Prudence, and to my doughter also, for ye have entred into myn hous by violence, and have doon such outrage, that alle men knowe welle that ye have deserved the deth; and therfore wil I knowe and wite of yow, whether ye wol putte the punyschment and the chastisement and the vengeaunce of this outrage, in the wille of me and of my wyf, dame Prudence, or ye wil not.' Thanne the wisest of hem thre answerde for hem alle, and sayde: 'Sire,' quod he, 'we knowe wel, that we be unworthy to come to the court of so gret a lord and so worthy as ye be, for we han so gretly mystake us, and have offendid and giltid in such a wise ageins youre heighe lordschipe, that trewely we have deserved the deth. But yit for the greete goodnes and debonairete that al the world witnesseth of youre persone, we submitten us to the excellence and benignite

of youre gracious lordschipe, and ben redy to obeye to alle youre comaundementz, bisechynge yow that of youre merciable pite ye wol considre oure grete repentaunce and lowe submissioun, and graunte us forgivenes of oure outrage, trespas, and offence. For wel we knowen, that youre liberal grace and mercy strechen forthere into goodnesse than doth oure outrage, gilt, and trespas, into wikkednes; al be it that cursedly and dampnably we have agilt ageinst youre highe lordschipe.' Thanne Melibe took hem up fro the ground ful benignely, and resceyved here obligaciouns, and here bondes, by here othes upon here plegges and borwes, and assigned hem a certeyn day to retourne unto his court for to accepte and receyve the sentence and juggement that Melibe wolde comaunde to be doon on hem, by these causes aforn sayde; which thing ordeyned, every man retourned home to his hous. And whan that dame Prudence saugh hire tyme, sche freyned and axed hire lord Melibe, what vengeance he thoughte to take upon his adversaries. To which Melibeus answerd and saide: 'Certes,' quod he, 'I thenke and purpose me fully to desherite hem of al that ever thay have, and for to putte hem in exil for evermore.'

'Certes,' quod dame Prudence, 'this were a cruel sentence, and mochil ageinst resoun. For ye ben riche y-nough, and have noon neede of other mennes good; and ye mighte lightly gete yow a coveitous name, which is a vicious thing, and oughte to ben eschewed of every man; for after the sawe of thapostil, covetise is roote of alle harmes. And therfore it were bettre for yow to lese so moche good of youre oughne, than for to take of here good in this manere. For bettir it is to lese good with worschipe, than it is to wynne good with vilonye and schame. And every man oughte to do his diligence and his busynesse, to gete him a good name. And yit schal he nought oonly busie him

in kepynge of his good name,[1] but he schulde enforce him alway to do som thing, by which he may renovele his good name; for it is writen, that the olde goode loos of a man is soone goon and passed, whan it is not newed ne renoveled. And as touchinge that ye sayn, that ye wol exile youre adversaries, that thinketh me mochil ageinst resoun, and out of mesure, considered the power that thay han gyve to yow upon here body and on hem self. And it is writen, that he is worthy to lese his privelege, that mysuseth the might and the power that is geve to him. And yit I sette the caas, ye mighte enjoyne hem that peyne by right and lawe (which I trowe ye mow nought do), I say, ye mighte nought putte it to execucioun peraventure, and thanne were it likly to torne to the werre, as it was biforn. And therfore if ye wol that men do yow obeissaunce, ye moste deme more curteisly, that is to sayn, ye moste give more esyere sentence and juggement. For it is writen: He that most curteysly comaundeth, to him men most obeyen. And therfore I pray yow, that in this necessite and in this neede ye caste yow to overcome youre herte. For Senek saith, he that overcometh his herte, overcometh twyes. And Tullius saith: Ther is no thing so comendable in a gret lord, as whan he is debonaire and meeke, and appesith him lightly. And I pray yow, that ye wol forbere now to do vengeaunce, in such a manere, that youre goode name may be kept and conserved, and that men mowe have cause and matiere to prayse yow of pite and of mercy; and that ye have noon cause to repente yow of thing that ye doon. For Senec saith: He overcometh in an evel manere, that repenteth him of his victorie. Wherfore I pray yow let mercy be in youre herte, to theffect and thentent, that God almighty have mercy and pite upon yow in his laste juggement. For seint Jame[2]

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[1] *And yit schal . . . good name.* This passage, omitted in the Harl. MS., is restored from the Lansd. MS.—W. [2] James ii. 13.

saith in his Epistil: juggement withoute mercy schal be doon to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.'

Whan Melibe had herd the grete skiles and resouns of dame Prudens, and hir wys informacioun and techynge, his herte gan enclyne to the wille of his wyf, consideryng hir trewe entent, confermed him anoon and consented fully to werke after hir reed and counseil, and thankid God, of whom procedeth al goodnes, that him sente a wif of so gret discrecioun. And whan the day cam that his adversaries schulden appere in his presence, he spak to hem ful goodly, and sayde in this wise: 'Al be it so, that of youre pryde and heigh presumpcioun and folye, and of youre nëgligence and unconnynge, ye have mysbore yow, and trespassed unto me, yit forasmoche as I se and biholde youre humilite, that ye ben sory and repentaunt of youre giltes, it constreigneth me to do yow grace and mercy. Wherfore I receyve yow to my grace, and forgeve yow outerly alle the offenses, injuries, and wronges, that ye have don to me and agayns me and myne, to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endeles mercy wole at the tyme of oure deyinge forgive us oure giltes, that we have trespased to him in this wrecchid world; for douteles and we ben sory and repentaunt of the synnes and giltes whiche we have trespassed inne in the sight of oure lord God, he is so free and so merciable, that he wil forgive us oure gultes, and bringe us to the blisse that never hath ende.' *Amen.*

THE PROLOGE OF THE MONKES TALE.

WHAN ended was my tale of Melibe
And of Prudence and hire benignite,
Oure Hoste sayde, 'As I am faithful man,
And by the precious corpus Madryan![1]

[1] In Urry's *Glossary* this is interpreted, 'By the body of Saint Maternus of Treves.'

I hadde lever than a barel ale
That gode leef my wyf had herd this tale.
For sche is no thing of such pacience
As was this Melibeus wyf dame Prudence.
By Goddes boones! whan I bete my knaves,
Sche bringeth me forth the grete clobbet staves,
And crieth, 'slee the dogges everychon!
And breke of hem bothe bak and bon!'
And if that eny neghebour of myne
Wol nought to my wyf in chirche enclyne,
Or be so hardy to hir to trespace,
Whan sche comth hom, sche rampeth in my face,
And crieth, 'false coward, wreke thy wyf!
By corpes bones! I wil have thy knyf,
And thou schalt have my distaf and go spynne.'
Fro day to night right thus sche wil bygynne;
'Allas!' sche saith, 'that ever I was i-schape,
To wedde a mylk-sop or a coward ape,
That wil be over-lad with every wight!
Thou darst nought stonde by thy wyves right.'
This is my lif, but if that I wil fight;
And out atte dore anoon I most me dight,
And ellis I am lost, but if that I
Be, lik a wilde leoun, fool-hardy.
I wot wel sche wol do me sle som day
Som neighebor, and thanne renne away.
For I am perilous with knyf in honde,
Al be it that I dar not hir withstonde.
For sche is big in armes, by my faith!
That schal he fynde that hire mysdoth or saith.
But let us passe away fro this matiere.
My lord the monk,' quod he, 'be mery of chere,
For ye schul telle a tale trewely.
Lo, Rowchestre[1] stant heer faste by.

[1] The pilgrims are represented in *The Chanounes Yemanne's Prologe* as having before this arrived at Boughton-under-Blee, five miles on the London side of Canterbury; this tale must, therefore, either be misplaced, or they must be supposed to be now on their return to Southwark.

Ryde forth, myn oughne lord, brek nought oure
But, by my trouthe, I can not youre name; [game!
Whether schal I calle yow my lord dan[1] Johan,
Or daun Thomas, or elles dan Albon?
Of what hous be ye, by your fader kyn?
I vow to God thou hast a ful fair skyn!
It is a gentil pasture ther thou gost;
Thow art not like penaunt or a goost.
Upon my faith, thou art an officer,
Som worthy sexteyn, or some celerer;[2]
For, by my fader soule, as to my doome,
Thou art a maister[3] whan thou art at hoom,
No pover cloysterer, ne non novys,
But a governour bothe wily and wys;
And therwithal of brawne and of bónes
A·wel faryng persone for the noones.
I praye God give him confusioun,
That first the broughte to religioun![4]
Thow woldist han be a trede-foul aright;
Haddist thou as gret a leve as thou hast[5] might

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[1] Dan, daun, don, or dom, is a contraction for *Dominus*, or, as it was often written, *Domnus*, and is the peculiar title of a Benedictine.

[2] The *Sacristan*, contracted *Sexton*, was the officer who had charge of the Sacristy, where the plate, consisting of chalices, patens, pixes, paxes, processional crosses, candlesticks, reliquaries, candles, incense, vestments, books, and other things of value used in the performance of divine service, were kept, and was therefore a person of considerable trust. The cellarer was also an officer of prodigious importance, for his duties are thus described by Du Cange, '*Cui potus et escæ cura est, qui cellæ vinariæ et escariæ præest, promus.*' Thus, in the *Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode*:—

'With that cam in a fat heded monke,
The heygh selerer'

[3] The Harl. MS. reads *officer*, which is probably a mistake arising from this word having occurred shortly before in the same sense. *Maister* is from Tyrwhitt.

[4] *Religion*, *religatio*, meaning a *bond* or *rule*, was appropriated in the middle ages to the state of monachism, or the living by a rule; and a *religious person* meant a person living in this state, whether he or she were religious or not, in the modern sense of the word.

[5] *Thou hast* are added from the Lansd. MS., and seem necessary to the sense and metre.—W.

To performe al thi wil in engendrure,
Thow haddist bigeten many a creature.
Allas! why werest thou so wyd a cope?
God gif me sorwe! and I were a pope,
Nought only thou, but every mighty man,
Though he were schore[1] brode upon his pan,
Schuld han a wif; for al this world is lorn;
Religioun hath take up al the corn
Of tredyng, and we burel men ben schrympes;
Of feble trees ther cometh feble ympes.
This makith that oure heires ben so sclender
And feble, that thay may not wel engender.
This makith that our wyfes wol assaye
Religious folk, for thay may bettre paye
Of Venus payementes than may we.
God woot, no lusscheburghes[2] paye ye!
But beth nought wroth, my lorde, though I play,
For oft in game a soth I have herd say.'
This worthy Monk took al in pacience,
And saide, 'I wol doon al my diligence,
Als fer as souneth into honeste,[3]
To telle yow a tale, or tuo or thre;
And if yow lust to herken hider-ward,
I wil yow say the lif of seint Edward,[4]
Or elles first tregedis wil I yow telle,
Of which I have an hundred in my celle.[5]

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[1] Alluding, of course, to the tonsure.

[2] Base coins, so called, as Skinner supposes, because first imported from *Luxembourg*. They are called in stat. 25 Edward III. c. 2, *la monoie appelle Lucynbourg*.—T. A similar comparison occurs in *Piers Plowman*, thus given in the correct text of Mr. Wright's edition:

'As in *lussheburwes* is a luther alay,
And yet loketh he like a sterlyng.'

[3] As far as its tone is consistent with propriety. The same expression is used in the *Preces de Chaucere*:—'Alle thilke that sounen into synne.'

[4] St. Edward the Confessor.

[5] Such histories would naturally be popular in a monastery, as affording consolation to those who had entered the cloister from disappointed hopes, or had been consigned to it for state crimes, like the

Tregedis is to sayn a certeyn storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of hem that stood in greet prosperite,
And is y-fallen out of heigh degre
Into miserie, and endith wrecchedly;
And thay ben versifyed comunly
Of six feet, which men clepe exametron.[1]
In prose ben eek endited many oon;

Earl of Douglas, whose history is related by Sir Walter Scott, *Hist. of Scotland*, vol. i. He had been taken in rebellion by James II. of Scotland, but was by that monarch granted his life on condition that he *retired to the monastery of Lindores*,' to which sentence he submitted calmly, only using a popular proverb, 'He that cannot do better must be a monk!' The recollections suggested by such tragedies, of contests past and dangers escaped, would also have attractions for those who retired to a monastery to spend the evening of an eventful life in peace and seclusion, like Charles V., or the subject of the following curious picture, quoted by the learned Dean Butler in his *Hist. of Trim*:—

'Ipse post militiæ cursum temporalis,
Illustratus gratiâ doni spiritualis,
Esse Christi cupiens miles specialis,
In hâc domo monachus factus est claustralis.

Ultra modum placidus, dulcis et benignus,
Ob ætatis senium candidus ut cygnus,
Blandus et affabilis ac amari dignus,
In se sancti spiritus possidebat pignus.

Nam sanctam ecclesiam sæpe frequentabat,
Missarum mysteria lætus auscultabat,
Et quas scire poterat laudes personabat,
Ac cœlestem gloriam mente ruminabat.

Ejus conversatio dulcis et jocosa,
Valde commendabilis et religiosa,
Ita cunctis fratribus fuit gratiosa,
Quod nec gravis exstitit nec fastidiosa.

Hic per claustrum quotiens transiens meavit,
Hinc et hinc ad monachos caput inclinavit,
Et sic nutu capitis eos salutavit,
Quos affectu intimo plurimum amavit,' &c.

[1] The Monk probably means Latin hexameter; for, though the verse of Gamelyn, the suppositious *Ploughman's Tale*, and prologues, like the verse afterwards generally used by Surrey and Wyatt, consists sometimes of six iambic feet, the term 'hexameter' has been generally appropriated to the metre of Homer and Virgil.

In metre eek, in many a sondry wise;[1]
Lo, this declaryng ought y-nough suffise.
Now herkneth, if yow likith for to heere;
But first I yow biseche in this matiere,
Though I by ordre telle not thise thinges,
Be it of popes, emperours, or kynges,
After her age, as men may write fynde,
But telle hem som bifore and som byhynde,
As it cometh now to my remembraunce,
Haveth me excused of myn ignoraunce.

THE MONKES TALE.

[THE idea of this tale, very appropriately related by the Monk (see *ante*, p. 184, note 5), was probably derived from Boccaccio's great work, *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*, though in the tragedy of *Zenobia* the poet quotes as from Petrarch. This mistake Tyrwhitt supposes to have arisen from 'Boccaccio's book having fallen into his hands under the name of Petrarch,' an explanation which is far from satisfactory. Both in the substance and order of the tales, however, as Mr. Wright observes, Chaucer has departed from his original, introducing some tragedies which are not to be found in Boccaccio's work, and remodelling others. The reader will perceive that he follows and even transcends the custom of mediæval writers generally, by deducing his story from times anterior even to the creation of the world, which was their remotest starting-point. The plan of this collection of tales was afterwards adopted, and elaborated, in the *Mirror of Magistrates;* and we may thus trace Buckhurst's design through Chaucer up to the common original of both—those old tragedies of which the Monk says, 'I have an hundred in my celle.'—See notice of Buckhurst in Ann. Ed. of Surrey's Poems, p. 261.]

[1] The Harl. MS. reads—

'And in metre eek, and in sondry wise,'

which does violence alike to the sense and metre. The text is from the Lansd. MS.

I WOL bywaile, in maner of tregedye,
The harm of hem that stood in heigh degre,
And fallen so ther is no remedye
To bring hem out of her adversite;
For certeynly, whan fortune lust to flee,
Ther may no man the cours of hir whiel holde;
Let no man truste in blynd prosperite,
Beth war by these ensamples trewe and olde.

LUCIFER.[1]

At Lucifer, though he an aungil were,
And nought a man, at him wil I bygynne;
For though fortune may non aungel derè,
From heigh degre yit fel he for his synne
Doun into helle, wher he yet is inne.
O Lucifer! brightest of aungels alle,
Now art thou Sathanas, thou maist nought twynne
Out of miserie in which thou art falle.

ADAM.

Lo Adam, in the feld of Damassene[2]
With Goddes oughne fynger wrought was he,
And nought bigeten of mannes sperma unclene,
And welt al paradys, savyng oon tre.
Had never worldly man suche degre
As Adam, til he for mysgovernance
Was dryven out of heigh prosperite,
To labour, and to helle, and to meschaunce.

[1] This tragedy is not found in Boccaccio. It seems to be taken from Isaiah xiv. 12-15, 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art *thou* cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.'

[2] So Lydgate, from Boccace, speaks of Adam and Eve, *Trag.* b. i. c. 19:—

'Of slime of the erth in Damascene the felde
God made them above ech creature.'

Boccace is much longer in relating this story, which is the first of his tragedies.—T.

SAMPSON.[1]

Lo Sampson, whiche that was annunciate
By thangel, long er his nativite,
And was to God Almighty consecrate,
And stood in nobles whil that he might se.
Was never such another as was he,
To speke of strength, and therto hardynesse;
But to his wyfes told he his secre,
Thurgh which he slough himselfe for wrecchidnesse.
Sampson, this noble and myhty champioun,
Withouten wepen save his hondes tueye,
He slowhe and al to-rent the lyoun
To-ward his weddynge walkinge be the waie.
The false wif couthe him plese and preie
Til sche his counseile knewe, and sche, untrewe,
Unto his foos his consel gan bewreye,
And him for-soke, and toke another newe.[2]
Thre hundred foxis took Sampson for ire,
And alle her tayles he togider bond;
And sette the foxes tailes alle on fuyre,
For he in every tail hath knyt a brond;
And thay brent alle the cornes of that lond,
And alle her olyvers and vynes eeke.
A thousand men he slough eek with his hond,
And hadde no wepen but an asses cheeke.
Whan thay were slayn, so thursted him that he
Was wel ner lorn, for which he gan to preye
That God wolde of his peyne have som pite,
And send him drynk, and elles must he deye.
And out of this asses cheke, that was so dreye,
Out of a woung-toth sprong anon a welle,
Of which he dronk y-nough, schortly to seye;
Thus halp him God, as Judicum[3] can telle.

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[1] Tyrwhitt says that Chaucer appears to have taken this story immediately from Judges xiv. xv. xvi., rather than from Boccaccio.

[2] This stanza has been accidentally omitted in the Harl. MS., and is here inserted from the Lansd. MS.—W.

[3] The poet quotes the title of the Book of Judges, *Liber Judicum*, in the *Vulgate*, just as he quotes Virgil as *Eneidos*.

By verray fors at Algason,[1] on a night,
Maugre the Philistiens of that cite,
The gates of the toun he hath up plight,
And on his bak caried hem hath he,
Heigh upon an hil, wher men might hem se.
O noble almighty Sampson, leef and deere,
Haddest thou nought to wommen told thy secre,
In al the world ne hadde be thy peere.
This Sampson neyther siser[2] dronk ne wyn,
Ne on his heed com rasour noon ne schere,
By precept of the messager divyn,
For alle his strengthes in his heres were.
And fully twenty wynter, yer by yere,
He hadde of Israel[3] the governaunce.
But soone he schal wepe many a teere,
For wymmen schuln him bringe to meschaunce.
Unto his lemman Dalida[4] he tolde
That in his heres al his strengthe lay;
And falsly to his foomen sche him solde,
And slepyng in hir barm upon a day
Sche made to clippe or schere his heres away,
And made his foomen al his craft espien.
And whan thay fonde him in this array,
They bound him fast, and put out bothe his yen.
But er his heer clipped was or i-schave,
Ther was no bond with which men might him bynde;
But now is he in prisoun in a cave,
Ther as thay made him at the querne[5] grynde.
O noble Sampson, strengest of al mankynde!

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[1] Mr. Wright has adopted *Gasan* instead of *Algason*, the reading of the Harl. MS.; but it has been restored, as apparently the Arabic form of the name, well known to the Crusaders in the reign of Edward III., *al* meaning *the*, as in *Alkoran*, *almegisthi*, &c.

[2] In the *Vulgate* this is *sicera*, translated in the authorised version *strong drink*. *Cider* is evidently a form of the same word, and is here used by Tyrwhitt.

[3] I have substituted this from the other manuscripts, in place of *Jerusalem*, which is the reading of the Harl. MS.—W.

[4] Where Chaucer found this form of the name does not appear, for in the *Vulgate* she is called *Dalila*.

[5] *Quern* means a mill in English, from the same root probably as

O whilom jugge in glory and in richesse!
Now maystow wepe with thine eyghen blynde,
Sith thou fro wele art falle to wrecchednesse!
Thend of this caytif was, as I schal say,
His foomen made a fest upon a day,
And made him as here fool biforn hem play;
And this was in a temple of gret array;
But atte last he made a foul affray.
For he two pilers schook, and made hem falle,
And doun fel temple and al, and ther it lay,
And slough himsilf and eek his fomen alle;
This is to sayn, the princes everichon;
And eek thre thousand bodies were ther slayn
With fallyng of the grete temple of stoon.
Of Sampson now wil I no more sayn;
Be war by these ensamples, olde and playn,
That no man telle his counseil to his wyf,
Of such thing as he wold have secre fayn,
If that it touche his lymes or his lif.

DE ERCULE.[1]

Of Ercules, the sovereyn conquerour,
Singen his werkes laude and heigh renoun;
For in his tyme of strength he bar the flour.
He slough and rafte the skyn fro the leoun;
He of Centaures layde the bost adoun;
He Arpies slough, the cruel briddes felle;
The gold appul he raft fro the dragoun;
He drof out Cerbures the fend of helle;
He slough the cruel tyrant Buserus,
And made his hors to frete him fleisch and boon;
He slough the verray serpent veneneus;

---

the German *querlen*, to twirl round. The Anglo-Saxon *cweorn*, or *cwyrn*, means a hand mill; and the name *quern* is still given to those curious hand-mills often found in the country. In East Anglia a hand-mill for grinding mustard is called a *quon*, evidently a corruption of this word. See Formby's *Dict. of East Anglia*.

[1] Tyrwhitt has pointed out the source whence Chaucer has derived this tragedy. It is from Boethius, lib. iv., met. vii.

Of Achiloyus two hornes he reft oon;
He slough Cacus in a cave of stoon;
He slough the geaunt Anteus the stronge:
He slough the grisly bore,[1] and that anoon;
And bar the hevene[2] upon his necke longe.
Was never wight, siththen the world bigan,
That slough so many monstres as dede he;
Thurghout the wide world his name ran.
What for his strengthe and for his bounte,
And every roialme went he for to se;
He was so strong, ther might no man him lette.
At bothe the worldes endes, as saith the Trophe,[3]
In stede of boundes he a piler sette.
A lemman hadde this noble campioun,
That highte Dejanire, freissh as May;
And as these clerkes maken mencioun,
Sche hath him sent a schurte fresch and gay.
Alas! this schirt, allas and wailaway!
Envenymed was subtily withalle,
That er he hadde wered it half a day,
It made his fleisch al fro his bones falle.
But natheles som clerkes hir excusen,
By oon that highte Nessus, that it makyd.
Be as be may, I wil nought hir accusyn;
But on his bak he wered this schirt al nakyd,
Til that his fleisch was for the venym blaked.
And whan he saugh noon other remedye,

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[1] Substituted from the Lansd. MS. for *leoun*, the reading of the Harl. MS.—W.

[2] The Harl. MS. reads *the heed*, probably supposing it to mean the *boar's head*. Tyrwhitt's reading, however, here adopted, is evidently the correct one, as agreeing both with the Latin of Boethius, and with Chaucer's translation of it. 'And the last of his labours was that *he susteined the heven upon his necke unbowed*.' In the margin of one of Tyrwhitt's MSS., *longe* is interpreted in the margin *diu*.

[3] As all the best MSS. agree in this reading, I have retained it, though I cannot tell what author is alluded to. The margin of b. i. has this note:—'*Ille vates Chaldæorum Tropheus*.' The allusion is to the Pillars of Hercules, or Straits of Gibraltar.

In hote colis he hath himself i-raked;
For no venym deyned him to dye.
Thus starf this mighty and worthy Ercules.
Lo! who may truste fortune eny throwe?
For him that folweth al this world of pres,[1]
Er he be war, is oft y-layd ful lowe.
Ful wys is he that can himselven knowe!
Be war, for whan that fortune lust to glose,
Than waytith sche hir man to overthrowe,
By suche way as he wolde lest suppose.

DE REGE NABUGODONOSOR.[2]

The mighty trone, the precious tresor,
The glorious ceptre and real mageste,
That had the king Nabugodonosore,
With tonge unnethes may descryved be.
He twyes wan Jerusalem that cite;
The vessel[3] out of the temple he with him ladde;
At Babiloyne was his sovereyn see,
In which his glorie and his delyt he ladde.
The fairest children of the blood roial
Of Israel he dede gelde anoon,
And made ylk of hem to ben his thral;
Amonges othre Daniel was oon,
That was the wisest child of everychoon;
For he the dremes of the king expouned,
Ther as in Caldeyn was ther clerkes noon
That wiste to what fyn his dremes souned.
This proude king let make a statu of gold,
Sixty cubites long and seven in brede,
To which ymage bothe yonge and olde
Comaunded he to love and have in drede,
Or in a fornays ful of flames rede

---

[1] *Pres* means *crowd*. 'This world of pres' signifies, therefore, *this crowding, pushing world*.

[2] The source of this tragedy is Daniel, from the first to the fifth chapter. It is not found in Boccaccio.

[3] A gallicanism. *La vaisselle* means *the plate*.

He schulde be brent that wolde not obeye.
But never wolde assente to that dede
Danyel ne his felawes tweye.
This king of kinges preu was and[1] elate;
He wende God that sit in mageste
Ne might him nought bireve of his estate.
But sodeynly he left his dignite,
I-lik a best him semed for to be,
And eet hay as an oxe, and lay ther-oute
In rayn, with wilde bestes walkyd he,
Til certein tyme was i-come aboute.
And lik an eglis fetheres were his heres,
His hondes like a briddes clowes were,
Til God relessed him a certeyn yeres.
And gaf him witte, and thanne with many a tere
He thanked God, and ever he is afere
To doon amys or more to trespace.
And er that tyme he layd was on bere,
He knew wel God was ful of might and grace.

BALTHAZAR.[2]

His sone, which that highte Balthazar,
That huld the regne after his fader day,
He by his fader couthe nought be war,
For proud he was of hert and of array;
And eek an ydolaster was he ay.
His heigh astate assured him in pryde;
But fortune cast him doun, and ther he lay,
And sodeynly his regne gan divide.
A fest he made unto his lordes alle
Upon a tyme, he made hem blithe be;
And than his officeres gan he calle,
'Goth, bringeth forth the vessealx,' quod he,
'The which my fader in his prosperite

[1] *And*, omitted in the Harl. MS., has been added by Mr. Wright from Tyrwhitt.

[2] This tragedy is found in Boccaccio's work. Balthazar is in the *Vulgate* called Baltassar, and in the authorised version Belshazzar.

Out of the temple of Jerusalem byraft;
And to oure hihe goddis thanke we
Of honours that oure eldres with us laft!'
His wif, his lordes, and his concubines
Ay dronken, whiles her arriont[1] last,
Out of this noble vesseals sondry wynes.
And on a wal this king his yhen cast,
And saugh an hond armles, that wroot fast;
For fere of which he quook and siked sore.
This hond, that Balthazar made so sore agast,
Wrot, *Mane, techel, phares*, and no more.
In al the lond magicien was noon
That couthe expounde what this lettre ment.
But Daniel expoundith it anoon,
And sayde, 'King, God to thy fader sent
Glori and honour, regne, tresor, and rent;
And he was proud, and nothing God ne dredde,
And therfor God gret wreche upon him sent,
And him biraft the regne that he hadde.
'He was out cast of mannes compaignye,
With asses was his habitacioun,
And eete hay in wet and eek in drye,
Til that he knew by grace and by resoun
That God of heven had dominacioun
Over every regne and every creature;
And than han God of him compassioun,
And him restored to his regne and his figure.
'Eke thou that art his sone art proud also,
And knowest al this thing so verrayly,
And art rebel to God and art his fo;
Thou dronk eek of his vessel bodily,
Thy wyf eek and thy wenche sinfully
Dronke of the same vessel sondry wynes;
And heriest false goddes cursedly;
Therfore to the schapen ful gret pyne es.

[1] This is the reading of the Harl MS.; it is a word which occurs nowhere else, as far as I am aware, but I have not ventured to alter it. The Lansd. MS. reads *appetites*, which Tyrwhitt adopts.—W.

'This hond was send fro God, that on the wall
Wrot, *Mane, techel, phares,* truste me.
Thy regne is doon, thou weyist[1] nought at al;
Divided is thy regne, and it schal be
To Meedes and to Perses geven,' quod he.
And thilke same night, the king was slawe,
And Darius occupied his degre,
Though therto neyther had he right ne lawe.
Lordyngs, ensample her-by may ye take,
How that in lordschip is no sikernesse;
How whan fortune wil a man forsake,
Sche bereth away his regne and his richesse,
And eek his frendes bothe more and lesse.
And what man hath of frendes the fortune,
Mishap wil make hem enemyes, I gesse;
This proverbe is ful sothe and ful comune.

ZENOBIA.[2]

Cenobia, of Palmire the queene,
As writen Perciens of hir noblesse,
So worthy was in armes and so keene,
That no wight passed hir in hardynesse,
Ne in lynage, ne in other gentilnesse.
Of the kinges blood of Pers sche is descendid;
I say that sche had not most fairnesse,
But of hir schap sche might not be amendid.
Fro hir childhod I fynde that sche fledde
Office of wommen, and to woode sche went,
And many a wilde hertes blood sche schedde
With arwes brode that sche to hem sent;
Sche was so swyft, that sche anoon hem hent.
And whan that sche was elder, sche wolde kille
Leouns, lebardes, and beres al to-rent,
And in hir armes weld hem at hir wille.

[1] The Harl. MS., evidently by mistake, reads *wenist*; it is corrected from the Lansd.

[2] Related by Boccaccio in the *De Casibus*; but Chaucer has evidently followed the version of the same author in his book *De Claris Mulieribus*.

Sche dorste wilde bestes dennes seke,
And renne in the mounteyns al the night,
And slepe under a bussh; and sche couthe eeke
Wrastil by verray fors and verray might
With eny yong man, were he never so wight.
Ther mighte no thing in hir armes stonde.
She kept hir maydenhed from every wight;
To no man deyned hire to be bonde.
But atte last hir frendes han hir maried
To Odenake, prince of that citee,
Al were it so that sche him longe taried.
And ye schul understonde how that he
Had suche fantasies as hadde sche.
But natheles, whan thay were knyt in fere,
Thay lyved in joye and in felicite;
For ech of hem had other leef and deere.
Save oon thing, sche wolde never assent
By no way that he schulde by hir lye
But oones, for it was hir playn entent
To have a child the world to multiplie;
And also soone as she might aspye
That sche was not with childe yit in dede,
Than wold sche suffre him doon his fantasie
Eftsones, and nought but oones, out of drede.
And if sche were with child at thilke cast,
No more schuld he playe thilke game,
Til fully fourty dayes were y-past,
Than wold sche suffre him to do the same.
Al were this Odenake wilde or tame,
He gat no more of hir, for thus sche sayde,
Hit nas but wyves lecchery and schame,
In other caas if that men with hem playde.
Tuo sones by this Odenak had sche,
The which sche kept in vertu and lettrure.
But now unto our purpos torne we;
I say, so worschipful a creature,
And wys, worthy, and large with mesure,
So penyble in the werre and curteys eeke,

Ne more labour might in werre endure,
Was nowher noon in al this world to seeke.
Hir riche array, if it might be told,
As wel in vessel[1] as in hir clothing,
Sche was al clothed in perre and gold;
And eek sche lafte nought for hir huntyng
To have of sondry tonges ful knowing;
Whan sche had leyser and might therto entent,
To lerne bookes was al hir likyng,
How sche in vertu might hir lif despent.
And schortly of this story for to trete,
So doughty was hir housbond and eek sche,
That thay conquered many regnes grete
In thorient, with many a fair citee
Appurtienant unto the mageste
Of Rome, and with strong hond hulden hem fast;
Ne never might her fomen doon hem fle
Ay while that Odenakes dayes last.
Her batails, who so lust hem for to rede,
Agayn Sapor the king and other mo,
And how that this processe[2] fel in dede,
Why sche conquered, and what title had therto,
And after of hir meschief and hir woo,
How that sche was beseged[3] and i-take,
Let hem unto my mayster Petrark[4] go,
That writeth of this y-nough, I undertake.
Whan Odenake was deed, sche mightily,
The regnes huld, and with hir propre hond
Ageins hir foos sche faught ful trewely,
That ther nas king ne prince in al that lond
That he nas glad if he that grace fond
That sche ne wold upon his lond werraye.

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[1] See *ante*, p. 192, note 3.

[2] That is, How all this process, or concatenation of circumstances, fell out.

[3] This reading is adopted from the Lansd. MS., as best suited to the context. The Harl. MS. has *deceyved*.—W.

[4] See Introduction to this tale.

With hir thay made alliaunce by bond,
To ben in peese, and let hir ryde and play.
The emperour of Rome, Claudius,
Ne him biforn the Romayn Galiene,
Ne dorste never be so corrageous,
Ne noon Ermine,[1] ne Egipciene,
No Surrien, ne noon Arrabiene,
Withinne the feld that durste with hir fight,
Lest that sche wold hem with her hondes sleen,
Or with hir meyne putten hem to flight.
In kinges abyt went hir sones tuo,
As heires of her fadres regnes alle;
And Hermanno and Themaleo
Here names were, as Parciens hem calle.[2]
But ay fortune hath in hir hony galle;
This mighty queene may no while endure,
Fortune out of hir regne made hir falle
To wrecchednesse and to mysadventure.
Aurilian whan that the governaunce
Of Rome cam into his hondes tway,
He schop him of this queen to do vengeaunce;
And with his legiouns he took the way
Toward Cenoby; and schortly to say
He made hir flee, and atte last hir hent,
And feterid hir, and eek hir children tweye,
And wan the lond, and home to Rome he went.
Amonges other thinges that he wan,
Hir chaar, that was with gold wrought and perre,
This grete Romayn, this Aurilian,
Hath with him lad, for that men schulde se,
Bifore this triumphe walkith sche,
And gilte cheynes in hir necke hongynge;
Corouned sche was, as aftir hir degre,
And ful of perre chargid for hir clothyng.

---

[1] Armenian.

[2] This reading is adopted from the Lansd. MS. as better than that of the Harl., *And Parciens men han calle*. The meaning is, As Persians call them, or as they are called in the Persian language.

Allas! fortune! sche that whilom was
Dredful to kinges and to emperoures,
Now gaureth[1] al the pepul on hir, alas!
And sche that helmyd was in starke stoures,
And whan bifore tounes stronge and toures,
Schal on hir heed now were a wyntermyte;[2]
And sche that bar the cepter ful of floures,
Schal bere a distaf hirself for to quyte.

DE PETRO HISPANIE REGE.[3]

O noble Petro, the glori of Spayne,
Whom fortune held so heigh in mageste,
Wel oughte men thy pitous deth complayne;
Thy bastard brother made the to fle,
And after, at a sege, by subtilte

---

[1] Tyrwhitt's reading is here adopted in preference to *gaulcth*, that of the Harl. MS. The word occurs in the same sense in *The Man of Lawes Tale—To gauren on the schip.*

[2] This word is differently written in MSS. *vitrymite*, *witermite*, *wintermite*, *vitryte*; and the printed editions read *autremite*. If a conjecture might be hazarded as to the meaning of a word which has perplexed all the commentators, it may be supposed to signify *a myte*, wrapping, warm covering, like the modern word *mitten*, for the winter, such as is worn by the lower order of Frenchwomen when *en deshabille*, and called by them *marmotte*, a word which may be allied with *wintermitte*. Thus the Chanounes Yeman, wishing to describe the poverty to which he was reduced, says—

> 'Ther I was wont to be right freisch and gay
> Of clothing, and of other good array,
> *Now may I were an hose upon myn heed.*'

[3] Tyrwhitt and Speght have arranged the tragedies more correctly as to chronological order; but there seems no good reason for altering the arrangement of the Harl. MS., because the Monk professes beforehand not to follow the order of time, and because the Host, on interrupting him, takes up the last words of the tragedy of *Cresus*, which, according to Tyrwhitt's plan, had been spoken long before. The principal historian of this interesting and stirring period of Spanish affairs is Mariana; and the most circumstantial information respecting the reign of Pedro is to be found in the *Chronicles of Castile*, by Pero Lopez de Ayala, who was a member of the King's household, and served in the civil war against Aragon. The commendation bestowed in the text upon Peter the Cruel may be accounted for by his alliance with Edward the Black Prince, from whom he received important services in his war against his bastard brother, Enrique.

Thow were bytrayed, and lad to his tent,[1]
Wher as he with his oughne hond slough the,
Succedyng in thy lond and in thy rent.
The feld of snow, with thegle of blak ther-inne,
Caught with the leoun, reed coloured as is the gleede,
He brewede the cursednesse and synne,
The wikked nest werker[2] of this neede.
Nought Charles Oliver[3] that ay took heede
Of trouthe and honour, but of Armoryk
Geniloun Oliver, corruptid for mede,
Broughte this worthy king in such a bryk.

DE PETRO CIPRE REGE.[4]

O worthy Petro king of Cipres, also,
That Alisaunder wan by heigh maistrye,
Ful many an hethen wroughtest thou ful wo,
Of which thin oughne lieges had envye;
And for no thing but for thy chivalrie,

---

[1] According to Froissart, Pedro was murdered, not in the tent of Don Enrique, but in that of one of his knights, Yvron de Lakonnet. The treachery by which the unfortunate King was induced to attempt his flight from the castle of Montiel, and then delivered up to his rival, is ascribed by Ayala to Bertrand du Guesclin, who, affecting to accept Pedro's offers of a bribe to connive at his escape, received him at night outside the walls, and then gave him up to his doom. Froissart is silent upon the negotiations between Pedro and Du Guesclin.

[2] *Nest werker*, perhaps he who *hatched* the conspiracy, a metaphor suggested probably by the eagle in the arms of the traitor.

[3] The Harl. MS reads *nought Oliver ne Charles;* Tyrwhitt's reading is here adopted as being more intelligible. It appears to mean, 'This Oliver, though bearing the name of Oliver, the celebrated Paladin of Charlemagne, was more like Guenelon (see *ante* p. 98, note 2), the Breton, who betrayed his sovereign.' *Charles* and *Geniloun* are used as adjectives, the former to express truth and honour, the latter baseness and perfidy. The personal allusion, however, is involved in obscurity. Oliver, who, as Tyrwhitt remarks, might be discovered by a herald from his arms, was, probably, one of the circle of knights present at the mortal struggle. But no such name occurs in any of the chronicles. It is possible the reference may be intended to Du Guesclin himself, who was a native 'of Armoryk.'

[4] This was Pierre de Lusignan, King of Cyprus, whose capture of Alexandria in 1365 has been already alluded to in the description of the Knight in the General Prologue. He was assassinated in 1369.

Thay in thy bed han slayn the by the morwe.
Thus can fortune the whel governe and gye,
And out of joye bringe men into sorwe.

DE BARNABO COMITE MEDIOLANO.[1]

Of Melayn grete Barnabo Viscount,
God of delyt and scourge[2] of Lumbardye,
Why schuld thyn infortune I nought accounte,
Syn in astaat thou clombe were so hye?
Thy brother sone, that was thy double allie,
For he thy nevew was and sone in lawe,
Withinne his prisoun made the to dye;
But why ne how, not I, that thou were slawe.

DE HUGILINO COMITE PISE.[3]

Of the erl Hugilin of Pise the langour
Ther may no tonge telle for pite.
But litel out of Pise stant a tour,
In whiche tour in prisoun put was he;
And with him been his litel children thre,
Theldest skarsly fyf yer was of age;
Allas! fortune! it was gret cruelte
Suche briddes to put in such a cage.

Dampnyd he was to deye in that prisoun,
For Roger, which that bisschop was of Pise,
Had on him maad a fals suggestioun;
Thurgh which the peple gan on him arise,
And putte him in prisoun in such wise
As ye han herd, and mete and drynk he hadde
So smal that wel unnethe it may suffise,
And therwithal it was ful pore and badde.

---

[1] Bernabo Visconti, Duke of Milan, was deposed by his nephew and thrown into prison, where he died in 1385. The allusion to him here supplies one of the internal evidences of the dates after which *The Canterbury Tales* must have been written.

[2] The Harl. MS. reads *strength*, which does not so well describe the character of this robber Duke as the reading of the Lansd. MS., which is here adopted.

[3] Chaucer himself refers to Dante for the original of the tragedy. See *Inferno*, c. xxxiii.—T.

And on a day bifel that in that hour
Whan that his mete was wont to be brought,
The gayler schet the dores of that tour.
He herd it wel, but he ne saugh it nought,
And in his hert anoon ther fel a thought
That thay for hungir wolde doon him dyen.
'Alas!' quod he, 'allas! that I was wrought!'
Therwith the teeres felle fro his eyen.
His yongest sone, that thre yer was of age,
Unto him sayde, 'Fader, why do ye wepe?
Whan wil the gayler bringen oure potage?
Is ther no morsel bred that ye doon kepe?
I am so hongry that I may not sleepe.
Now wolde God that I might slepe ever!
Than schuld not hunger in my wombe crepe.
Ther is no thing save bred that me were lever.'
Thus day by day this child bigan to crie,
Til in his fadres barm adoun he lay,
And sayde, 'Far wel, fader, I moot dye!'
And kist his fader, and dyde the same day.
And whan the woful fader deed it say,
For wo his armes tuo he gan to byte,
And sayde, 'Fortune, alas and waylaway!
Thin false whele[1] al my woo I wyte.'
His childer wende that it for hongir was,
That he his armes gnew, and nought for wo,
And sayden, 'Fader, do nought so, allas!
But rather et the fleisch upon us tuo.
Oure fleisch thou gave us, oure fleisch thou take us fro,
And ete y-nough;' right thus thay to him seyde.
And after that, withinne a day or tuo,
Thay layde hem in his lappe adoun and deyde.
Himself despeired eek for honger starf.
Thus ended is this mighty eorl of Pise;
For his estate fortune fro him carf.

---

[1] The reading of the Lansd. MS. has been adopted in the text in preference to *querel*, that of the Harl.

Of this tregede it ought y-nough suffise;
Who so wil it hiere in lenger wise,
Rede the gret poet of Itaile
That highte Daunt, for he can it devise,
Fro poynt to poynt nought oon word wil he fayle.

DE NERONE.[1]

Although Nero were als vicious
As any fend that lith ful lowe adoun,
Yit he, as tellith us Swethoneus,
This wyde world had in subjeccioun,
Bothe est ond west, south[2] and septemtrioun.
Of rubies, safers, and of perles white,
Were alle his clothes embrouded up and doun;
For he in gemmis gretly gan delite.

More delycat, more pompous of array,
More proud was never emperour than he.
That ylke cloth that he had wered a day,
After that tyme he nolde it never se,
Nettis of gold thred had he gret plente,
To fissche in Tyber, whan him lust to pleye.
His willes were as lawe in his degre,
For fortune as his frend wold him obeye.

He Rome brent for his delicacie;
The senatours he slough upon a day,
To here how men wold wepe and crye;
And slough his brother, and by his suster lay.
His modir made he in pitous array,
For hire wombe slyt he, to byholde
Wher he conceyved was, so waylaway!
That he so litel of his moodir tolde.

[1] Mr. Wright observes that, though Chaucer quotes Suetonius as his authority for this tragedy, he has derived it immediately from the *Roman de la Rose*, and from Boethius, *De Consol. Phil.*, lib. ii. met. 6.

[2] *South* is introduced by Tyrwhitt, and agrees with the *Roman de la Rose*:—

'Ce desloyal que je te dy,
Et d'orient et de *midy*,
D'occident, de septentrion,
Tint-il la jurisdicion.'

No teer out of his eyen for that sight
Ne came; but sayde, a fair womman was sche.
Gret wonder is that he couthe or might
Be domesman on hir dede[1] beaute.
The wyn to bringen him comaundid he,
And drank anoon, noon other wo he made.
Whan might is torned unto cruelte,
Allas! to deepe wil the venym wade.
In youthe a maister had this emperour,
To teche him letterure and curtesye;
For of moralite he was the flour,
As[2] in his tyme, but if bokes lye.
And whil his maister had of him maistrie,
He made him so connyng and so souple,
That long tyme it was or tyrannye
Or ony vice dorst on him uncouple.
This Seneca, of which that I devyse,
Bycause Nero had of him such drede,
For fro vices he wol him chastise
Discretly as by word, and nought by dede.
'Sir,' wold he sayn, 'an emperour mot neede
Be vertuous and hate tyrannye.'
For which he in a bath made him to bleede
On bothe his armes, til he moste dye.
This Nero hadde eek a custumance
In youthe agein his maister for to ryse,
Which after-ward he thought a gret grevaunce;
Therfore he made him deye in this wise.
But natheles this Seneca the wise

---

[1] *Dede* is omitted in the Harl. MS., but is here restored from Tyrwhitt, as necessary to the sense and metre. Tyrwhitt quotes from Chaucer's translation of Boethius, lib. ii. met. vi., an illustration of this phrase: 'Ne no tere wette his face, but he was so harde herted, that he might be *domesman*, or *judge*, of her *dedde* beautie.' Domesman is the *man of dooms*, or judgments.

[2] Speght's and Tyrwhitt's reading has been here adopted in preference to that of the Harl. MS., *and*, which is not so clear.

Ches in a bath to deye in this manere,
Rather than to have another tormentise;[1]
And thus hath Nero slayn his maister deere.
Now fel it so that fortune lust no lenger
The highe pride of Nero to cherice;
For though he were strong, yit was sche strenger;
Sche thoughte thus, 'By God! I am to nyce,
To set a man that is ful sad[2] of vice
In high degre, and emperour him calle;
By God! out of his sete I wil him trice;
Whan he lest weneth, sonnest schal he[3] falle.
The poeple ros on him upon a night
For heigh defaute, and whan he it aspyed,
Out of his dores anoon he hath him dight
Aloone, and ther he wende have ben allyed,
He knokked fast; and ay the more he cried,
The faster schette thay the dores alle.
Than wist he wel he had himself mysgyed,
And went his way, no lenger durst he calle.
The peple cried, and rumbled up and doun,
That with his eres herd he how thay sayde,
'Wher[4] is this fals traitour, this Neroun?'
For fere almost out of his witte he brayde,
And to his goddes pitously he prayde
For socour, but it mighte nought betyde;
For drede of this him thoughte that he dyde,
And ran into a gardyn him to hyde.
And in this gardyn fond he cherlis twaye
Sittynge by a fuyr ful greet and reed.
And to these cherles tuo he gan to praye

---

[1] *Tormentise* has been introduced from Tyrwhitt, as better than *tyrannie*, the reading of the Harl. MS.

[2] *Sad of vice* means *serious* in the pursuit of vice, apparently in contradistinction to mere youthful excess.

[3] The Harl. MS. reads *byfalle*, evidently a mistake for *he falle*, which is Tyrwhitt's reading.

[4] The Harl. MS. reads *Her*, evidently by mistake. The reading in the text is from Speght and Tyrwhitt.

To sleen him, and to girden of his heed,
That to his body, whan that he were deed,
Were no despyt y-doon for his defame.
Himself he slough, he couthe no better reed;
Of which fortune thai lough and hadde game.

DE OLIPHERNO.[1]

Was never capitaigne under a king
That regnes mo put under subjeccioun,
Ne strenger was in feld of alle thing
As in his tyme, ne gretter of renoun;
Ne more pompous in heih presumpcioun,
Than Oliphern, which that fortune ay kist
So licorously, and ladde him up and doun,
Til that his heed was of, er he it wist.

Nought oonly that the world had of him awe,
For lesyng of riches and liberte,
But he made every man reneye his lawe;
Nabugodonosor was lord, sayde he;
Noon other god schuld honoured be.
Ageinst his heste dar no wight trespace,
Save in Betholia, a strong cite,
Wher Eliachim[2] a prest was of that place.

But tak keep of that dethe of Olipherne;
Amyd his ost he dronke lay on night
Withinne his tente, large as is a berne;
And yit, for al his pomp and al his might,
Judith, a womman, as he lay upright
Slepying, his heed of smot, and fro his tent
Ful prively sche stal from every wight,
And with his heed unto hir toun sche went.

---

[1] This story is taken from the Book of Judith, in the authorised version placed among the books called Apocrypha.

[2] Tyrwhitt says, 'I cannot find any priest of this name in the book of Judith. The high priest of Jerusalem is called Joacim in c. iv.' Mr. Wright observes that Tyrwhitt ought to have consulted the *Vulgate*, where the name is given as above. The confusion arises from both names meaning the same in Hebrew, *El* and *Jo* or *Jah*, both signifying *God*.

DE REGE ANTIOCHIE ILLUSTRI.[1]

What needith it of king Antiochius,
To telle his heye real mageste,
His heyhe pride, his werke venemous?
For such another was ther noon as he.
Redeth which that he was in Machabe,
And redith the proude wordes that he sayde,
And why he fel fro his prosperite,
And in an hil how wrecchidly he deyde.

Fortune him hath enhaunced so in pryde,
That verraily he wend he might atteyne[2]
Unto the sterris upon every syde,
And in a balaunce weyen ech mounteyne,
And alle the floodes of the see restreyne.
And Goddes peple had he most in hate;
Hem wold he slee in torment and in peyne,
Wenyng that God ne might his pride abate.

And for that Nichanor and Thimothe
With Jewes were vanquist mightily,
Unto the Jewes such an hate had he,
That he bad graithe his chaar hastily,
And swor, and sayde ful despitously,
Unto Jerusalem he wold eftsoone,
To wreke his ire on it full cruelly;
But of his purpos he was let ful soone.

God, for his manace, him so sore smoot
With invisible wounde incurable,
That in his guttes carf it so and bot,
That his peynes were importable.
And certeynly the wreche was resonable;[3]
For many a mannes guttes dede he peyne;
But fro his purpos cursed and dampnable,
For al his smert, he nolde him nought restreyne.

[1] Taken from 2 Maccabees, c. ix.

[2] The Harl. MS. reads for *atteyne, have teyned*; and for *weyen ech mounteyne, weyen what ech mounteyne*. Mr. Wright has corrected it from other MSS.

[3] That is, This vengeance (wreche) was in accordance with poetical justice.

But bad anoon apparailen his host,
And sodeynly, er he was of it ware,
God daunted al his pride and al his bost
For he so sore fel out of his chare,
That it his lymes and his skyn to-tare,
So that he nomore might go ne ryde;
But in a chare men aboute him bare
Al for-brosed, bothe bak and syde.
The wreche of God him smot so cruely,
That in his body wicked wormes crept,
And therwithal he stonk so orribly,
That noon of al the meyne that him kepte,
Whether that he wook or elles slepte,
Ne mighte nought the stynk of him endure.
In this meschief he weyled and eek wepte,
And knew God lord of every creature.
To al his host and to himself also
Ful wlatsom was the stynk of his carayne;
No man ne might him bere to ne fro;
And in his stynk and his orrible payne
He starf ful wrecchedly in a mountayne.
Thus hath this robbour and this homicide,
That many a man made wepe and playne,
Such guerdoun as that longeth unto pryde.

DE ALEXANDRO MAGNO, PHILIPPI REGIS MACEDONIE FILIO.[1]

The story of Alisaunder is so comune,
That every wight that hath discrecioun
Hath herd som-what or al of this fortune;
Thys wyde world as in conclusioun
He wan by strengthe, or for his heigh renoun,

[1] For this tragedy Chaucer quotes the Book of Maccabees; but, as Chaucer says, 'the story of Alisaunder was so comune,' in the middle ages, that it is needless to trace the source of his information. The *Roman d'Alexandre* is one of the early French poems of this class.

Thay were glad for pees unto him sende.[1]
The pride of man and bost he layd adoun,
Wher so he cam, unto the worldes ende.
Comparisoun yit mighte never be maked
Bitwen him and noon other conquerour;
For al this world for drede of him hath quaked.
He was of knyghthod and of fredam flour;
Fortune him made the heir of hir honour;
Save wyn and wymmen, no thing might aswage
His heigh entent in armes and labour,
So was he ful of leonyne[2] corage.
What pris[3] were it to him, though I yow tolde
Of Darius, and an hundred thousand mo
Of kynges, princes, dukes, eorles bolde,
Which he conquered and brought unto wo?
I say, as fer as men may ryde or go,
The world was his, what schold I more devyse?
For though I write or tolde you evermo
Of his knighthood, it mighte nought suffise.
Twelf yer he regned, as saith Machabe;[4]
Philippes son of Macedon he was,
That first was king in Grece that contre.
O worthy gentil Alisaundre, alas!
That ever schulde falle such a caas!
Empoysoned of thin oughne folk thou were;
Thyn sis fortune is torned into an aas,[5]
And right for the ne wepte sche never a teere.
Who schal me give teeres to compleigne
The deth of gentiles and of fraunchise,
That al the worlde had in his demeigne;

---

[1] That is, They were glad to send to him to entreat peace.

[2] This reading is adopted from Tyrwhitt, as much better than *lumyne*, the reading of the Harl., or *lovenge*, that of the Lansd. MS.

[3] The Harl. MS. reads *pité*, which is unintelligible. *Pris* is from Speght and Tyrwhitt; and the meaning is, What advantage, what increase of honour, would it be to him though I told you, &c.

[4] 1 Maccab. i. 8.

[5] That is, Thy fortune, which was once the highest on the dice (*sis*, or *size*), was changed into the lowest (*ace*).

And yit him thought it mighte nought suffice,
So ful was his corage of high emprise.
Allas! who schal helpe me to endite
Fals infortune, and poysoun to devyse,
The whiche two of al this wo I wyte.

JULIUS CESAR.[1]

By wisedom, manhod, and by gret labour,
Fro humblehede to royal mageste
Up roos he, Julius the conquerour,
That wan al thoccident by land and see,
By strengthe of hond or elles by trete,
And unto.Rome made hem contributarie,
And siththe of Rome themperour was he,
Til that fortune wax his adversarie.
O mighty Cesar, that in Thessalie
Agains Pompeus, fader thin in lawe,
That of the orient had al the chivalrie,
Als fer as that the day bigynnes to dawe,
Thorugh thi knighthod thou hast him take and slawe,
Save fewe folk that with Pompeus fledde;
Thurgh which thou puttist al thorient in awe;
Thanke fortune that so wel the spedde.
But now a litel while I wil bywaile
This Pompeus, the noble governour
Of Rome, which that flowe fro this bataile;
Alas! I say, oon of his men, a fals traitour,
His heed of smoot, to wynne his favour
Of Julius, and him the heed he brought.
Alas! Pompeus, of the orient conquerour,
That fortune to such a fyn the brought.
To Rome agayn repaireth Julius,
With his triumphe lauriel ful hye.
But on a tyme Brutus and Cassius,
That ever had to his estat envye,
Ful prively hath made conspiracie

[1] For the tragedy of *Julius Cæsar*, Chaucer quotes Lucan, Suetonius, and Valerius Flaccus.

Agains this Julius in subtil wise;
And cast the place in which he schulde dye
With boydekyns, as I schal yow devyse.
This Julius to the capitoile went
Upon a day, as he was ȝont to goon;
And in the capitoil anoon him hent
This false Brutus, and his other foon,
And stiked him with boydekyns anoon
With many a wounde, and thus thay let him lye.
But never gront he at no strook but oon,
Or elles at tuo, but if the storie lye.
So manly was this Julius of hert,
And so wel loved estatly honeste,
That though his deedly woundes sore smert,
His mantil over his hipes caste he,
For no man schulde seen his privete.
And as he lay deyinge in a traunce,
And wiste wel that verrayly deed was he,
Of honeste yet had he remembraunce.
Lucan, to the this story I recomende,
And to Swetoun and to Valirius also,
That al the story writen word and ende,
How to these grete conqueroures tuo
Fortune was first frend and siththen fo.
No man trust upon hir favour longe,
But have hir in awayt for evermo,
Witnesse on alle thise conqueroures stronge.

CRESUS.[1]

This riche Cresus, whilom king of Lyde,
Of which Cresus Cirus him sore dradde,
Yet was he caught amyddes al his pride,

[1] The Harl. MS. for *Cresus* reads *Gresus* throughout. 'In the opening of this story,' says Tyrwhitt, 'our author has plainly copied the following passage in his own version of Boethius, b. ii. pro. 2: 'Weste thou not how Cresus, King of Lydiens, *of whiche King Cyrus was ful sore agaste* a litel before,' &c. But the greatest part is taken from the *Roman de la Rose*.'

And to the fuyr to brenne him men him ladde.
But such a rayn doun fro the heven schadde,
That slough the fuyr and made him to eschape.
But to be war yet grace noon he hadde,
Til fortune on the galwes made him gape.
Whan he was eschaped, he couth nought stent
For to bygynne a newe werre agayn;
He wende wel, for that fortune him sent
Such hap that he eschaped thurgh the rayn,
That of his foos he mighte not be slayn.
And eek a sweven upon a night he mette,
Of which he was so proud and eek so fayn,
That in vengeaunce he al his herte sette.
Upon a tree he was set, as him thought,
Wher Jubiter him wissch bothe bak and side,
And Phebus eek a fair towail him brought
To drye him with, and therfore wax his pride;
And to his doughter that stood him biside,
Which that he knew in heigh science abounde,
And bad hire telle what it signifyde,
And sche his dreem right thus gan expounde.
'The tree,' quod sche, 'the galwes is to mene,
And Jubiter betokenith snow and rayn,
And Phebus with his toweil so clene,
Tho ben the sonne stremes, soth to sayn.
Thow schalt enhangid ben, fader, certayn;
Rayn schal the wasch, and sonne schal the drye.'
Thus warned sche him ful plat and ek ful playn,
His doughter, which that called was Phanie.
And hanged was Cresus this proude king,
His real trone might him not availe.
Tragedie is non other maner thing,
Ne can in singing crien ne bewaile,[1]
But for that fortune wil alway assayle

[1] Tyrwhitt's reading is here adopted in preference to that of the Harl. MS.:—

'Tragedis, ne noon other maner thing,
Ne can I singe, crie, ne biwayle,'

With unwar strook the regnes that ben proude;
For whan men trusteth hir, than wil sche faile,
And cover hir brighte face with a clowde.

THE PROLOGE OF THE NONNE PRESTES TALE.

'HO, sire!' quod the Knight, 'no more of this;
That ye had said is right y-nough I wys,
And mochil mor; for litel hevynesse
Is right i-nough for moche folk, I gesse.
I say for me, it is a gret disease,
Wher as men han ben in gret welthe and ease,
To hieren of her sodeyn fal, allas!
And the contraire is joye and gret solas;
As whan a man hath ben in pore estate,
And clymbith up, and wexeth fortunate,
And ther abydeth in prosperite;
Such thing is gladsom, as[1] it thinkith me,
And of such thing were goodly for to telle.'
'Ye,' quod oure Host, 'by seint Paules belle,
Ye say right soth; this monk hath clappid lowde;
He spak, how fortune was clipped with a clowde,
I not never what, and als of tregedie
Right now ye herd; and pardy! no remedye
It is for to bywayle or compleyne
That that is doon; and also it is a peyne,
As ye han said, to hiere of hevynesse.
Sire monk, no more of this, so God yow blesse;
Your tale anoyeth al this compaignie;
Such talkyng is nought worth a boterflye,

---

which appears to be unintelligible. Tyrwhitt supposes that this reflection was suggested by the passage just quoted from Boethius. 'What other thing bewaylen the cryinges of tragedyes but onely the dedes of fortune, that with an aukewarde stroke overtourneth the realmes of grete nobleye.'

[1] Tyrwhitt's reading has been adopted as better than that of the Harl. MS., which reads *and*.

For therinne is noon disport ne game.
Wherfor, sir monk, damp Pieres by your name,
I pray yow hertly, tel us somwhat ellis;
For sicurly, ner gingling of the bellis[1]
That on your bridil hong on every syde,
By heven king, that for us alle dyde,
I schold er this han falle doun for sleep,
Although the slough had never ben so deep;
Than had your tale have be told in vayn.
For certeynly, as these clerkes sayn,
Wher as a man may have noon audience,
Nought helpith it to tellen his sentence.
And wel I wot the substance is in me,
If eny thing schal wel reported be.
Sir, say somwhat of huntyng,[2] I yow pray.'
'Nay,' quod the Monk, 'I have no lust to play;
Now let another telle, as I have told.'[3]
Then spak our Ost with rude speche and bold,
And said unto the nonnes prest anoon,
'Com ner, thou prest, com ner, thou sir Johan,[4]
Tel us such thing as may our hertes glade;
Be blithe, although thou ryde upon a jade.

[1] See vol. i. p. 84, note 4. [2] See vol. i. p. 84, note 3.

[3] The Monk's stiffness and unwillingness to enter into the spirit of the proceedings any further than is absolutely necessary is highly characteristic. He is throughout represented as belonging to that class of churchmen who base their title to respect upon the value of their benefices, the sumptuousness of their manner of living, and the decorum of their manners. He is, in short, what is called at the University a Don. His fellow-churchman, the Frere, on the contrary, is anxious to show his superiority in argument, and loses no opportunity of joining in the dialogue, even at the expense of some loss of dignity. The Knight, again, is dignified, but his dignity is of that kind which is not afraid to venture into any company, or to come into contact with the humours of any class of men, and which comes unscathed out of every ordeal.

[4] Tyrwhitt observes that in all the modern languages John is a name of contempt. In this sense the Italians use *Geani*, whence Zany, the Spaniards Bobo Juan, the English Jack-fool, Jack-pudding, Jack-ass, cheap Jack, &c. He adds that *sire* was a title usually given to priests, both secular and regular; but this was probably on the assumption that they had taken the degree of B.A., just as every clergyman in France is called *Monsieur l'Abbé*, though few are really abbots.

What though thin hors be bothe foul and lene?[1]
If he wil serve the, rek not a bene;
Lok that thin hert be mery evermo.'
'Yis, sire, yis, Hoste,' quod he, 'so mot I go,
But I be mery, I wis I wol be blamed.'
And right anoon he hath his tale tamyd;
And thus he sayd unto us everichoon,
This sweete prest, this goodly man sir Johan.

THE NONNE PREST HIS TALE.

[WHETHER Chaucer invented, or borrowed, this admirable fable, is open to conjecture. Dryden, whose version of it under the title of *The Cock and the Fox* has rendered the subject familiar to all readers, says that it is Chaucer's invention; Tyrwhitt supposes that it is derived from the fifty-first fable in the collection translated by Marie, the author of *The Laies*, from the Anglo-Saxon of King Alfred; and Mr. Wright thinks that it was taken from the fifth chapter of the celebrated *Roman de Renart*, entitled *Si comme Renart Prist Chantecler le Coc* (ed. Meon., tom. i. p. 49). The last supposition is, probably, correct; but, from whatever source Chaucer may have drawn the hint of the plot, there can be little doubt that the wit and ingenuity are exclusively his own, and that, if he had an original, he has gone far beyond it in the subtlety and humour of the treatment.]

A POORE wydow, somdel stope in age,
Was whilom duellyng in a pore cotage,
Bisyde a grove, stondyng in a dale.
This wydowe, of which I telle yow my tale,
Syn thilke day that sche was last a wif,
In paciens ladde a ful symple lyf.
For litel was hir catel and hir rent;
For housbondry of such as God hir sent,

[1] Chaucer is perfectly impartial in his satire upon the horses of the clergy, whether they are fat or lean. The Monk incurs his ridicule for riding a horse *in great estaat*, the Nun's Priest for riding a jade.

Sche fond hirself, and eek hir doughtres tuo.
Thre large sowes had sche, and no mo,
Thre kyn, and eek a scheep that highte Malle.
Ful sooty was hir bour, and eek hir halle,
In which she eet ful many a sclender meel.
Of poynaunt saws hir needid never a deel.
Noon deynteth morsel passid thorugh hir throte;
Hir dyete was accordant to hir cote.
Repleccioun ne made hir never sik;
Attempre dyete was al hir phisik,
And exercise, and hertes suffisaunce.
The goute lette hir nothing for to daunce,
Ne poplexie schente not hir heed;
No wyn ne drank sche, nother whit ne reed;
Hir bord was servyd most with whit and blak,
Milk and broun bred, in which sche fond no lak,
Saynd bacoun, and som tyme an ey or tweye;
For sche was as it were a maner deye.[1]
A yerd sche had, enclosed al aboute
With stikkes, and a drye dich withoute,
In which she had a cok, hight Chaunteclere,
In al the lond of crowyng was noon his peere.
His vois was merier than the mery orgon,[2]
On masse dayes that in the chirche goon;

---

[1] Tyrwhitt supposes this word to have originally meant a day-labourer, like journeyman, and *homme de journée* in French, and to have been afterwards applied to the superintendent of a *dayerie*. But it would rather seem, both from this place and the statutes quoted by him, to mean the superintendent of the eggs, quasi, *Eye*, from whence *dairy*, a place for keeping eggs, is itself derived, because both eggs and milk and butter were kept there. Thus, in stat. 37 Edward III., c. 14, 'Iten qe charetters, charciers, chaceours des carnes, bovers, vachers, berchers, porchers, *deyes*, et tous autres gardeins des betes;' where all the *gardins* of domestic animals are enumerated, except those of the poultry, to which *deyes* should, therefore, probably be appropriated. As a further illustration, a hawk's nest is called an *eyerie*, *i. e.* the place where it lays its eggs; and a young hawk an *eyass*, because reared from the egg. This derivation is borne out by the context, in which the widow's food is said to have been occasionally varied by an egg or two, *because* she was a kind of *deye*, or dealer in eggs, which accounts also for her possessing Chanticleer and his wives.

[2] Tyrwhitt observes that orgon is a plural noun for organs, from the

Wel sikerer was his crowyng in his logge,
Than is a clok, or an abbay orologge.
By nature knew he ech ascencioun
Of equinoxial in thilke toun;
For whan degrees fyftene were ascendid,
Thanne crewe he, it might not ben amendid.
His comb was redder than the fine coral,
And batayld, as it were a castel wal.
His bile was blak, and as the geet it schon;
Lik asur were his legges, and his ton;
His nayles whitter than the lily flour,
And lik the burnischt gold was his colour.
This gentil cok had in his governaunce
Seven hennes, for to do al his plesaunce,
Whiche were his sustres and his paramoures,
And wonder lik to him, as of coloures.
Of whiche the fairest hiewed on hir throte,
Was cleped fayre damysel Pertilote.
Curteys sche was, discret, and debonaire,
And companable, and bar hirself ful faire,
Syn thilke day that sche was seven night[1] old,
That sche hath trewely the hert in hold
Of Chaunteclere loken in every lith;[2]
He loved hir so, that wel him was therwith.
But such a joye was it to here him synge,
Whan that the brighte sonne gan to springe,
In swete accord, 'my liefe is faren on londe.'[3]
Fro thilke tyme, as I have understonde,
Bestis and briddes cowde speke and synge.
And so byfel, that in a dawenynge,
As Chaunteclere among his wyves alle
Sat on his perche, that was in his halle,

Latin *organa*, and agrees, therefore, with the plural verb goon. It is thus used again—

'And while that the organs maken melodee.'

A pair of organs, like a pair of stairs, is a common expression in mediæval writers.

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *yer*, and is here corrected from the Lansd.

[2] Locked in every limb.

[3] Apparently the *refrain* of a popular song of the time.

And next him sat this faire Pertelote,
This Chauntecler gan gronen in his throte,
As man that in his dreem is drecched sore.
And whan that Pertelot thus herd him rore,
Sche was agast, and sayde, 'herte deere,
What eylith yow to grone in this manere?
Ye ben a verray sleper, fy for schame!'
And he answerd and sayde thus, 'Madame,
I pray yow, that ye take it nought agreef:
By God, me mette I was in such meschief
Right now, that yit myn hert is sore afright.
Now God,' quod he, 'my sweven rede aright,
And keep my body out of foul prisoun!
Me mette, how that I romed up and doun
Withinne oure yerd, wher as I saugh a beest,
Was lik an hound, and wold have maad arrest
Upon my body, and wold han had me deed.
His colour was bitwixe yolow and reed;
And tipped was his tail, and bothe his eeres
With blak, unlik the remenaunt of his heres.
His snowt was smal, with glowyng yen tweye;
Yet of his look for fer almost I deye;
This caused me my gronyng douteles.'
'Away!' quod sche, 'fy on yow, herteles!
Allas!' quod sche, 'for, by that God above!
Now have ye lost myn hert and al my love;
I can nought love a coward, by my feith.
For certis, what so eny womman seith,
We alle desiren, if it mighte be,
To have housbondes, hardy, riche, and fre,
And secre, and no nygard, ne no fool,
Ne him that is agast of every tool,
Ne noon avaunter, by that God above!
How dorst ye sayn for schame unto your love,
That any thing might make yow afferd?
Have ye no mannes hert, and han a berd?[1]

[1] Pertelote here speaks out of character; but this is apparently by

Allas! and can ye ben agast of swevenys?
Nought, God wot, but vanite, in sweven is.
Swevens engendrid ben of repleccioums,
And often of fume, and of complexioums,
Whan humours ben to abundaunt in a wight.
Certes this dreem, which ye han met to-night,
Cometh of the grete superfluite
Of youre reede *colera*, parde,
Which causeth folk to dremen in here dremes
Of arwes, and of fuyr with reede beemes,
Of rede bestis, that thai wil him byte,
Of contek, and of whelpis greet and lite;
Right as the humour of malencolie
Causeth, in sleep, ful many a man to crye,
For fere of beres, or of boles blake,
Or elles blake develes wol hem take.
Of other humours couthe I telle also,
That wirken many a man in slep ful woo;
But I wol passe as lightly as I can.
Lo Catoun,[1] which that was so wis a man,
Sayde he nought thus, ne do no force of dremes?
Now, sire,' quod sche, 'whan we fle fro thise beemes,
For Goddis love, as tak som laxatyf;
Up peril of my soule, and of my lyf,
I counsel yow the best, I wol not lye,
That bothe of coloure, and of malencolye[2]
Ye purge yow; and for ye schol nought tarye,
Though in this toun is noon apotecarie,
I schal myself tuo herbes techyn yow,
That schal be for your hele, and for youre prow;
And in oure yerd tho herbes schal I fynde,
The whiche han of her proprete by kynde
To purgen yow bynethe, and eek above.
Forget not this, for Goddis oughne love!

---

design, for the purpose of producing a more ludicrous and grotesque effect.

[1] Lib. ii. dist. 32, 'Somnia ne cures.'

[2] This and the following line, omitted in the Harl. MS., are restored from the Lansd. MS. by Mr. Wright.

Ye ben ful colerik of complexioun.
Ware the sonne in his ascencioun
Ne fynd yow not replet in humours hote;
And if it do, I dar wel lay a grote,
That ye schul have a fever terciane,
Or an agu, that may be youre bane.
A day or tuo ye schul have digestives
Of wormes, or ye take your laxatives,
Of lauriol, centory, and fumytere,
Or elles of elder bery, that growith there,
Of catapus, or of gaytre beriis,
Of erbe yve that groweth in our yerd, that mery[1] is;
Pike hem up right as thay growe, and et hem in.
Be mery, housbond, for your fader kyn!
Dredith non dremes; I can say no more.'
'Madame,' quod he, '*graunt mercy* of your lore.
But natheles, as touching daun Catoun,
That hath of wisdom such a gret renoun,
Though that he bad no dremes for to drede,
By God, men may in olde bookes rede
Of many a man, more of auctorite
That ever Catoun was, so mot I the,
That al the revers sayn of his sentence,
And han wel founden by experience,
That dremes ben significaciouns,
As wel of joye, as of tribulaciouns,
That folk enduren in this lif present.
Ther nedeth make of this noon argument;
The verray preve schewith it in dede.
Oon of the grettest auctours[2] that men rede,
Saith thus, that whilom tway felawes went
On pylgrimage in a ful good entente;

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[1] *That mery* has been substituted from Tyrwhitt for *ther mercy*, the reading of the Harl. MS.

[2] Cicero (*de Divin.*, l. i. c. 27) relates this and the following story, but with so many differences that one might be led to suspect that he was here quoted at second hand, if it were not usual with Chaucer, in these stories of familiar life, to throw in a number of natural circumstances not to be found in the original authors.—T.

And happed so, thay come into a toun,
Wher as ther was such congregacioun
Of poeple, and eek so streyt of herbergage,
That thay fond nought as moche as oon cotage,
In which that thay might bothe i-logged be.
Wherfor thay mosten of necessite,
As for that night, depart her compaignye;
And ech of hem goth to his hostelrye,
And took his loggyng as it wolde falle.
That oon of hem was loggid in a stalle,
Fer in a yerd, with oxen of the plough;
That other man was logged wel y-nough,
As was his adventure, or his fortune,
That us governith alle in comune.
And so bifel, that, long er it were day,
This oon met in his bed, ther as he lay,
How that his felaw gan upon him calle,
And sayd, 'allas! for in an oxe stalle
This night I schal be murdrid ther I lye.
Now help me, deere brother, or I dye;
In alle haste cum to me,' he sayde.
This man out of his slep for fer abrayde;
But whan that he was waked out of his sleep,
He torned him, and took of this no keep;
Him thought his dreem nas but a vanite.
Thus twies in his sleepe dremed he.
And at the thridde tyme yet his felawe
Com, as him thought, and sayd, 'I am now slawe;
Bihold my bloódy woundes, deep and wyde!
Arise up erly in the morwe tyde,
And at the west gate of the toun,' quod he,
'A cart of donge there schalt thou see,
In which my body is hyd prively;
Do thilke cart arresten boldely.
My gold caused my mourdre, soth to sayn.'
And told him every poynt how he was slayn,
With a ful pitous face, pale of hewe.
And truste wel, his dreem he fond ful trewe;

For on the morwe, as sone as it was day,
To his felawes in he took the way;
And whan that he cam to this oxe stalle,
After his felaw he bigan to calle.
The hostiller answered him anoon,
And sayde, 'Sire, your felaw is agoon,
Als soone as day he went out of the toun.'
This man gan falle in a suspiccioun,
Remembring on his dremes that he mette,
And forth he goth, no lenger wold he lette,
Unto the west gate of the toun, and fond
A dong cart went as it were to donge lond,
That was arrayed in the same wise
As ye han herd the deede man devise;
And with an hardy hert he gan to crie
Vengeaunce and justice of this felonye.
'My felaw mordrid is this same night,
And in this carte he lith heer upright.
I crye out on the ministres,' quod he,
'That schulde kepe and reule this cite;
Harrow! allas! her lith my felaw slayn!'
What schold I more unto this tale sayn?
The peple upstert, and caste the cart to grounde,
And in the middes of the dong thay founde
The dede man, that mordred was al newe.
O blisful God, thou art ful just and trewe!
Lo, how thow bywreyest mordre alday!
Mordre wil out, certes it is no nay.
Morder is so wlatsom and abhominable
To God, that is so just and resonable,
That he ne wold nought suffre it hiled be;
Though it abyde a yeer, or tuo, or thre,
Morder wil out, this is my conclusioun.
And right anoon, the mynistres of that toun
Han hent the carter, and so sore him pyned,
And eek the hostiller so sore engyned,[1]

[1] Tortured with engines.

That thay biknew her wikkednes anoon,
And were anhonged by the nekke boon.
'Here may men se that dremys ben to drede.
And certes in the same book I rede,
Right in the nexte chapitre after this,
(I gabbe nought, so have I joye or bliss),
Tuo men that wolde have passed over see
For certeyn causes into fer contre,
If that the wynd ne hadde ben contrarie,
That made hem in a cite for to tarie,
That stood ful mery upon an haven syde.
But on a day, agayn the even tyde,
The wynd gan chaunge, and blew right as hem list.
Jolyf and glad they wenten unto rest,
And casten hem ful erly for to sayle;
But to that oon man fell a gret mervayle.
That oon of hem in his slepyng as he lay,
Him met a wonder drem, agayn the day;
Him thought a man stood by his beddes syde,
And him comaunded, that he schuld abyde,
And sayd him thus, 'If thou to morwe wende,
Thow schalt be dreynt; my tale is at an ende.'
He wook, and told his felaw what he mette,
And prayde him his viage to lette;
As for that day, he prayd him for to abyde.
His felaw that lay by his beddis syde,
Gan for to lawgh, and scorned him ful fast.
'No dreem,' quod he, 'may so myn herte gaste,
That I wil lette for to do my thinges.
I sette not a straw by thy dremynges,
For swevens been but vanitees and japes.
Men dreme al day of owles and of apes,
And eke of many a mase therwithal;
Men dreme of thinges that never be schal.
But sith I see that thou wilt her abyde,
And thus forslouthe wilfully thy tyde,
God wot it reweth me, and have good day.'
And thus he took his leve, and went his way.

But er he hadde half his cours i-sayled,
Noot I nought why, ne what meschaunce it ayled,
But casuelly the schippes bothom rent,
And schip and man undir the watir went
In sight of other schippes ther byside,
That with him sailed at the same tyde.
'And therfore, faire Pertelot so deere,
By such ensamples old maistow leere
That no man scholde be so recheles,
Of dremes, for I say the douteles,
That many a dreem ful sore is for to drede.
Lo, in the lif of seint Kenelm,[1] I rede,
That was Kenulphus sone, the noble king
Of Mercenrike, how Kenilm mette a thing.
A litil or he was mordred, upon a day
His modre in his avysioun he say.
His norice him expouned every del
His sweven, and bad him for to kepe him wel
For traisoun; but he nas but seven yer old,
And therfore litel tale hath he told
Of eny drem, so holy was his hert.
By God, I hadde lever than my schert,
That ye had rad his legend, as have I.
Dame Pertelot, I say yow trewely,
Macrobius,[2] that writ the avisioun
In Auffrik of the worthy Cipioun,
Affermeth dremes, and saith that thay been
Warnyng of thinges that men after seen.
And forthermore, I pray yow loketh wel
In the olde Testament, of Daniel,[3]
If he huld dremes eny vanyte.
Rede eek of Joseph,[4] and ther schal ye see
Whethir dremes ben som tyme (I say nought alle)
Warnyng of thinges that schul after falle.

[1] Kenelm succeeded his father Kenulph on the throne of the Mercians in 821, at the age of seven years, and was murdered by order of his aunt, Quenedreda.—W. His Legend is not in the Latin or French editions of the *Golden Legend*.

[2] The allusion is to his commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*.

[3] Daniel vii. 1.

[4] Gen. xxxvii.

Lok of Egipt the king, daun Pharao,[1]
His baker and his botiler also,
Whethir thay felte noon effect in dremis.
Who so wol seke actes of sondry remys,
May rede of dremes many a wonder thing.
Lo Cresus, which that was of Lydes king,
Mette he not that he set upon a tre,
Which signified he schuld hanged be?[2]
Lo hir Andromachia,[3] Ectors wif,
That day that Ector schulde lese his lif,
Sche dremed on the same night byforn,
How that the lif of Ector schuld be lorn,
If thilke day he wente to batayle;
Sche warned him, but it might nought availe;
He wente forth to fighte natheles,
And he was slayn anoon of Achilles.
But thilke tale is al to long to telle,
And eek it is neigh day, I may not duelle.
Schortly I say, as for conclusion,
That I schal have of this avisioun
Adversite; and I say forthermore,
That I ne telle of laxatifs no store,
For thay ben venemous, I wot it wel;
I hem defye, I love hem never a *del*.
'Now let us speke of mirthe, and *lete al this;*
Madame Pertilot, so have I blis,
Of o thing God hath me sent large *grace;*
For whan I see the beaute of your *face*,
Ye ben so scarlet hiew about your eyghen,
It makith al my drede for to deyghen,
For, al so siker as *In principio*,[4]
Mulier est hominis confusio.

[1] Gen. xli. [2] See *Monkes Tale*, Cresus.

[3] There is no such circumstance related by Homer. Chaucer found it, probably, in the fictitious history of *Dares Phrygius*, or in *Guido de Columnis*, or perhaps in Benoit de Saint More's *Roman de Troye*. See Tyrwhitt.

[4] That is, 'As sure as the gospel of St. John,' which begins with these words.

(Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is,
Womman is mannes joye and mannes blis.)
For when I fiele a-night your softe syde,
Al be it that I may not on you ryde,
For that your perche is mad so narrow, allas!
I am so ful of joye and solas,
That I defye both swevene and drem.'
And with that word he fleigh doun fro the beem,
For it was day, and eek his hennes alle;
And with a chuk he gan hem for to calle,
For he had found a corn, lay in the yard.
Real he was, he was nomore aferd;
He fetherid Pertelote twenty tyme,
And trad as ofte, er that it was prime.
He lokith as it were a grim lioun;
And on his toon he rometh up and doun,
Him deyned not to set his foot to grounde.
He chukkith, whan he hath a corn i-founde,
And to him rennen than his wifes alle.
Thus real, as a prince is in his halle,
Leve I this chaunteclere in his pasture;
And after wol I telle his aventure.
Whan that the moneth in which the world bigan,
That highte March, whan God maked first man,
Was complet, and y-passed were also,
Syn March bygan, tway monthes and dayes tuo,[1]
Byfel that Chaunteclere in al his pride,
His seven wyves walkyng by his syde,
Cast up his eyghen to the brighte sonne,
That in the signe of Taurus had i-ronne
Twenty degrees and oon, and somwhat more;
He knew by kynde,[2] and by noon other lore,
That it was prime, and crew with blisful steven.
'The sonne,' he sayde, 'is clomben up on heven

[1] That is, on the second of May. It was the common belief in the middle ages that the world was created in March, perhaps because in their calendar the year began on the 25th of that month, which was considered as New Year's Day.

[2] That is, by nature.

Twenty degrees and oon, and more I wis.
Madame Pertelot, my worldes blis,
Herknith these blisful briddes how thay synge,
And seth these freissche floures how thay springe;
Ful is myn hert of revel and solaas.'
But sodeinly him fel a sorwful caas;
For ever the latter end of joye is wo.
God wot that worldly joye is soone ago;
And if a rethor couthe faire endite,
He in a chronique saufly might it[1] write,
As for a soverayn notabilite.
Now every wys man let him herkne me;
This story is al so trewe, I undertake,
As the book is of Launcelot the Lake,[2]
That womman huld in ful gret reverence.
Now wol I torne agayn to my sentence.
A cole-fox, ful sleigh of iniquite,
That in the grove had woned yeres thre,
By heigh ymaginacioun forncast,
The same nighte thurgh the hegge brast
Into the yerd, ther Chaunteclere the faire
Was wont, and eek his wyves, to repaire;
And in a bed of wortes stille he lay,
Til it was passed undern of the day,
Waytyng his tyme on Chaunteclere to falle;
As gladly doon these homicides alle,
That in awayte lyn to morther men.
O false mordrer lurckyng in thy den!
O newe Scariot, newe Genilon![3]
Fals dissimulour, O Greke Sinon,
That broughtest Troye al utrely to sorwe!
O Chauntecler, accursed be the morwe,

[1] *It* is here given from Tyrwhitt, instead of *he*, the reading of the Harl. MS. Tyrwhitt says that on the margin of one of the MSS. is written *Petrus Comestor*, to intimate that this maxim is to be found in the *Historia Scholastica* of that author, who was a celebrated commentator on the Bible in the twelfth century. See Fabricius, *Bib. Med. Ætat.*, in 1 vol.

[2] The romance of *Lancelot du Lake*.

[3] See *ante*, p. 98, note 2.

That thou into the yerd flough fro the bemys!
Thow were ful wel warned by thy dremys,
That thilke day was perilous to the.
But what that God forwot most needes be,[1]
After the opynyoun of certeyn clerkis.
Witnesse on him, that eny parfit clerk is,
That in scole is gret altercacioun
In this matier, and gret disputesoun,
And hath ben of an hundred thousand men.
But yit I can not bult it to the bren,
As can the holy doctor Augustyn,
Or Boece, or the bischop Bradwardyn,[2]
Whether that Goddis worthy forwetyng
Streigneth me needely for to do a thing,
(Needely clepe I simple necessite);
Or elles if fre choys be graunted me
To do that same thing, or to do it nought,
Though God forwot it, er that it was wrought;
Or if his wityng streyneth never a deel,
But by necessite condicionel.
I wol not have to do of such matiere;
My tale is of a cok, as ye schal hiere,
That took his counseil of his wyf with sorwe,
To walken in the yerd upon the morwe,
That he had met the dreme, that I tolde.
Wymmens counseiles ben ful ofte cold;
Wommannes counseil brought us first to woo,
And made Adam fro paradys to go,

[1] Tyrwhitt observes, 'Our author has discussed the question of the divine prescience more at large in his *Troilus*, book iv. It is an addition of his own, of which there is no trace in the *Philostrate* of Boccace.' This question had long ago been settled on rational and scriptural grounds by St. Augustine, but was still a favourite subject of discussion in the schools, as affording an inexhaustible source of argument. To the schools, however, it was generally confined till Calvin introduced it into practical theology as the most effective weapon against the Catholic doctrine of the sacraments.

[2] Bradwardyn was chaplain and confessor to Edward III., and was by him appointed to the see of Canterbury in 1349. He lived only a week in the enjoyment of his promotion. In his great work, *De Causâ Dei*, he combats Pelagianism with St. Augustine's weapons.

Ther as he was ful mery, and wel at ease.
But for I not, to whom[1] it might displease,
If I counseil of womman wolde blame,
Pas over, for I sayd it in my game.
Red auctours, wher thay trete of such matiere,
And what thay sayn of wommen ye may heere.
These been the cokkes wordes, and not myne;
I can noon harme of womman divine.
Faire in the sond, to bathe hir merily,
Lith Pertelot, and alle hir sustres by,
Agayn the sonne; and Chaunteclere so free
Sang merier than the meremayd in the see;
For Phisiologus[2] seith sicurly,
How that thay syngen wel and merily.
And so byfel that as he cast his ye
Among the wortes on a boterflye,
He was war of this fox that lay ful lowe.
No thing ne list him thanne for to crowe,
But cryde anon, 'cok, cok,' and up he stert,
As man that was affrayed in his hert.
For naturelly a beest desireth flee
Fro his contrarie, if he may it see,
Though he never er had sayn it with his ye.
This Chaunteclere, whan he gan it aspye,
He wold han fled, but that the fox anon
Said, 'Gentil sire, allas! why wol ye goon?
Be ye affrayd of me that am youre frend?
Certes, I were worse than eny feend,

[1] *Whom* is substituted from Speght and Tyrwhitt for *him*, the reading of the Harl. MS. The Nun's Priest says naturally, 'I know not whom I might displease,' alluding to the nuns whose confessor he was, 'if I spoke against taking women's advice.'

[2] The reference is to a mediæval treatise on Natural History by Theobaldus, called *Physiologus de Natura XII., Animalium*, of which an early English metrical version was published by Mr. Wright in the *Reliq. Antiq.* vol. i., p. 208. The 19th section here alluded to begins thus:—

'Sirenæ sunt monstra maris resonantia magnis
Vocibus, et modulis cantus formantia multis.
Ad quas incaute veniunt sæpissime nautæ,
Quæ faciunt sompnum ninia dulcedine vocum.'

If I to yow wold harm or vilonye.
I am not come your counsail to espye.
But trewely the cause of my coming[1]
Was only for to herken how ye sing.
For trewely ye have als mery a steven,
As eny aungel hath, that is in heven;
Therwith ye[2] han of musik more felynge,
Than had Boece, or eny that can synge.
My lord your fader (God his soule blesse)
And youre moder of her gentilesse
Han in myn hous been, to my gret ease;
And certes, sire, ful fayn wold I yow please.
But for men speke of syngyng, I wol say,
So mot I brouke wel myn yen tway,
Save ye, I herde never man so synge,
As dede your fadir in the morwenynge.
Certes it was of hert al that he song.
And for to make his vois the more strong,
He wold so peynen him, that with bothe his yen
He moste wynke, so lowde he wolde crien,
And stonden on his typtoon therwithal,
And streche forth his necke long and smal.
And eek he was of such discressioun,
That ther nas no man in no regioun
That him in song or wisdom mighte passe.
I have wel rad in daun Burnel[3] thasse

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[1] This and the following line are omitted by mistake in the Harl. MS.

[2] *Ye* has been substituted from Tyrwhitt for *he*, the reading of the Harl. MS.

[3] The reference is to the Latin satirical poem of Nigellus de Wireker, monk and precentor of Canterbury, written about the year 1190, and entitled *Burnellus, sive Speculum Stultorum*.—See Leyser, *Poet. Med. Ævi.*, p. 752; also Wright's *Biog. Brit. Lit.*, Anglo-Norman period, which contains the best and fullest account of Wireker and his work. *Burnel*, quasi *Brunel*, is a nickname applied to the ass from his brown colour (just as the fox is called *Russel* from the red colour of his fur), and is applied to the ass of Balaam in the Chester Whitsun Plays. The prophet exclaims—

> 'Go forth, *Burnell*, go forth, go.
> What? the devil, my asse will not go.
> *Burnell*, why begilest thou me?'

Among his verses, how ther was a cok,
That, for a prestes sone gaf him a knok
Upon his leg, whil he was yong and nyce,
He made him for to lese his benefice.
But certeyn ther is no comparisoun
Betwix the wisdom and discressioun
Of youre fader, and of his subtilte.
Now syngeth, sire, for seinte Charite,[1]
Let se, can ye your fader countrefete?'
This Chaunteclere his wynges gan to bete,
As man that couthe his tresoun nought espye,
So was he ravyssht with his flaterie.
Allas! ye lordlynges, many a fals flatour
Is in your hous, and many a losengour,
That pleasen yow wel more, by my faith,
Than he that sothfastnesse unto yow saith.
Redith Ecclesiast of flaterie;
Beth war, ye lordes, of her treccherie.
This Chaunteclere stood heighe upon his toos,
Strecching his necke, and held his yhen cloos,
And gan to crowe lowde for the noones;
And daun Russel the fox stert up at oones,
And by the garget hente Chaunteclere,
And on his bak toward the woode him bere.
For yit was there no man that him sewed.
O desteny, that maist not ben eschiewed!
Allas, that Chaunteclere fleigh fro the bemis!
Allas, his wif ne roughte nought of dremis!
And on a Friday[2] fel al this mischaunce.
O Venus, that art goddes of pleasaunce,
Syn that thy servant was this Chaunteclere,
And in thy service did al his powere,
More for delit, than the world to multiplie,
Why woldest thou suffre him on thy day to dye?

[1] *Seinte charité* is a translation of *sancta charitas*, holy charity or love, and does not imply that there was any person of that name, though subsequent hagiographers have created a saint to apply it to, *for the nonce*.

[2] See vol. i. p. 137, note 5.

O Gaufred,[1] dere mayster soverayn,
That, whan the worthy king Richard was slayn
With schot, compleynedist his deth so sore,
Why ne had I nought thy sentence and thy lore,
The Friday for to chiden, as dede ye?
(For on a Fryday sothly slayn was he.)
Than wold I schewe how that I couthe pleyne,
For Chauntecleres drede, and for his peyne.
Certis such cry ne lamentacioun
Was never of ladies maad, whan Ilioun
Was wonne, and Pirrus with his strit swerd,
Whan he had hente kyng Priam by the berd,
And slaugh him (as saith us *Eneydos*),[2]
As maden alle the hennes in the clos,
Whan thay had sayn of Chauntecler the sight.
But soveraignly dame Pertelote schright,
Ful lowder than did Hasdrubaldes wyf;[3]
Whan that hir housebond had lost his lyf,
And that the Romayns had i-brent Cartage,
Sche was so ful of torment and of rage,
That wilfully unto the fuyr sche stert,
And brend hirselven with a stedfast hert.

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[1] Geoffrey of Vinsauf is generally believed to have been an Englishman by birth, but of a Norman family. Besides his principal and most valuable work, entitled *Itinerarium Regis Anglorum Ricardi, et aliorum in Terram Hierosolymorum*, he is the author of several treatises, amongst others one *De Poetriâ Novâ*, in which he gives, as a specimen of the plaintive style, a lamentation on the death of Richard I., whom he had accompanied in his crusade. See Wright's *Biog. Brit. Lit.*, Anglo-Norman period. The following passage is that above alluded to:—

'*O Veneris lacrymosa dies!* O sydus amarum!
Illa dies tua nox fuit, et Venus illa venenum.'

Tyrwhitt supposes that Chaucer intends to turn Geoffrey into ridicule; but this is doubtful. See Warton, *Hist. of Eng. Poet.*, dis. ii.

[2] Meaning Virgil in his *Eneidos*, lib. ii. 550:—

'Hoc dicens altaria ad ipsa trementem
Traxit, et in multo lapsantem sanguine nati,
Implicuitque comam lævâ, dextrâque coruscum
Extulit, ac lateri capulo tenus abdidit ensem.'

[3] For the story of 'Hasdrubaldes wyf,' see Livy xlix. and l., and Eutropius.

O woful hennes, right so cride ye,
As, whan that Nero brente the cite
Of Rome, criden the senatoures wyves,
For that her housbondes losten alle here lyves;
Withouten gult this Nero hath hem slayn.
Now wol I torne to my matier agayn.
The sely wydow, and hir doughtres two,
Herden these hennys crie and maken wo,
And out at dores starte thay anoon,
And sayden the fox toward the woode is goon,
And bar upon his bak the cok away;
They criden, 'Out! harrow and wayleway!
Ha, ha, the fox!' and after him thay ran,
And eek with staves many another man;
Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Garlond,
And Malkyn, with a distaf in hir hond;
Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges
So were they fered for berkyng of dogges,
And schowtyng of the men and wymmen eke,
Thay ronne that thay thought her herte breke.
That yelleden as feendes doon in helle;
The dokes criden as men wold hem quelle;
The gees for fere flowen over the trees;
Out of the hyve came the swarm of bees;
So hidous was the noyse, a *benedicite!*
Certes he Jakke Straw,[1] and his meyne,
Ne maden schoutes never half so schrille,
Whan that thay wolden eny Flemyng kille,
As thilke day was maad upon the fox.
Of bras thay broughten hornes and of box,
Of horn and boon, in which thay blew and powped,
And therwithal thay schryked and thay howped;
It semed as that heven schulde falle.
Now, goode men, I pray herkneth alle;

[1] Tyrwhitt observes in his introductory discourse that the insurrection of Jack Straw here mentioned is the latest historical allusion in *The Canterbury Tales;* but the story of Bernabo Visconti, in *The Monkes Tale* (see *ante*, p. 201), refers to a still later transaction.

Lo, how fortune torneth sodeinly
The hope and pride eek of her enemy![1]
This cok that lay upon this foxes bak,
In al his drede, unto the fox he spak,
And saide, 'Sire, if that I were as ye,
Yet schuld I sayn (as wis God helpe me),
Turneth agein, ye proude cherles alle!
A verray pestilens upon yow falle!
Now am I come unto this woodes syde,
Maugre youre hede, the cok schal heer abyde;
I wol him ete in faith, and that anoon.'
The fox answerd, 'In faith, it schal be doon.'
And whil he spak that word, al sodeinly
This cok brak from his mouth delyverly,
And heigh upon a tree he fleigh anoon.
And whan the fox seigh that he was i-goon,
'Allas!' quod he, 'O Chaunteclere, allas!
I have to yow,' quod he, 'y-don trespas,
Inasmoche as I makid yow aferd,
Whan I yow hent, and brought out of the yerd;
But, sire, I dede it in no wickid entent;
Com doun, and I schal telle yow what I ment.
I schal say soth to yow, God help me so.'
'Nay than,' quod he, 'I schrew us bothe tuo.
And first I schrew myself, bothe blood and boones,
If thou bigile me any ofter than oones.
Thou schalt no more, thurgh thy flaterye,
Do me to synge and wynke with myn ye.
For he that wynkith, whan he scholde see,
Al wilfully, God let him never the!'
'Nay,' quod the fox,' but God give him meschaunce,
That is so undiscret of governaunce,
That jangleth, whan he scholde holde his pees.'
Lo, such it is for to be recheles,
And necgligent, and trust on flaterie.
But ye that holde this tale a folye,

[1] Tyrwhitt's reading has been substituted for *envy*, that of the Harl. MS.

As of a fox, or of a cok or hen,
Takith the moralite therof, goode men.
For seint Poul saith,[1] that all that writen is,
To oure doctrine it is i-write I wis.
Takith the fruyt, and let the chaf be stille.
Now, goode God, if that it be thy wille,
As saith my lord,[2] so make us alle good men;
And bring us alle to his blisse. *Amen.*[3]

---

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 16. Chaucer appears to have thought that by *scripture* St. Paul meant any writing, and not *the* Scriptures *par excellence*.

[2] Tyrwhitt says that opposite to this verse in the Cott. MS. 1, is written 'Kantuar.' The Archbishop of Canterbury intended is probably Bradwardyn, who has been already quoted.

[3] In Speght, and in the MSS. in which the tale is followed by that of the Nonne, the following lines are inserted:—

'Sire nonnes preest, our hoste sayde anon,
Yblessed be thy breche and every ston,
This was a mery tale of Chaunteclere.
But by my trouthe, if thou were seculere,
Thou woldest ben a tredefoule aright:
For if thou had corage as thou hast might,
Thee were nede of hennes, as I wene,
Ye, mo than seven times seventene.
Se, whiche braunes hath this gentil preest,
So gret a necke, and swiche a large breest!
He loketh as a sparhauk with his eyen;
Him nedeth not his colour for to dien
With Brasil, ne with grain of Portingal.
But, sire, faire falle you for your tale.
And after that, he with ful mery chere
Sayd to another, as ye shulen here.'

Two MSS. consulted by Tyrwhitt give the last line thus:—

'Seide unto the nunne as ye shul heere,'

and then proceed as follows:—

'Madame, and I dorste, I wolde you pray
To telle a tale in fortheringe of our way.
Than mighte ye do unto us grete ese.
Gladly, sire, quoth she, so that I might plese
You and this worthy company,
And began hire tale riht thus ful sobrely.'

THE PROLOGE OF THE MAUNCIPLES TALE.

WOT ye not wher ther stont a litel toun,
Which that cleped is Bob-up-and-doun,[1]
Under the Ble, in Caunterbury way?
Ther gan our Hoste for to jape and play,
And sayde, 'Sires, what? Dun is in the myre!
Is ther no man for prayer ne for hyre,
That wol awake our felawe al byhynde?
A theef mighte ful lightly robbe and bynde.
Se how he nappith, se, for Goddes boones!
That he wol falle fro his hors at ones.
Is that a cook of Londoune, with meschaunce?
Do him come forth,[2] he knoweth his penaunce;
For he schal telle a tale, by my fay,
Although it be nought worth a botel hay.
Awake, thou cook, sit up, God gif the sorwe!
What eyleth the, to slepe by the morwe?[3]
Hast thou had fleen al night, or artow dronke?
Or hastow with som quen al night i-swonke,
So that thou maist not holden up thyn heed?'
This Cook, that was ful pale and nothing reed,
Sayd to our Host, 'So God my soule blesse,
As ther is falle on me such hevynesse,

---

[1] Mr. Wright supposes that the village of Harbledown is the place intended by Bob-up-and-down; and that it received this popular appellation because the traveller in approaching it was obliged to ascend and descend a number of low but steep hills. It stands on the borders of Blee, or Blean Forest.

[2] The editions previous to Tyrwhitt read, *Do him comfort*, which is not very intelligible. The meaning of *Do him come forth* is obvious. 'Make him come out from among the crowd of pilgrims, and ride near me, that I, as the judge, and the rest, may hear his tale the better.' Tyrwhitt remarks that 'it would have required the lungs of a Stentor to speak audibly to a company of thirty people trotting on together in a road of the fourteenth century.' But it should be remembered that it was then the custom to recite poetry to a sort of monotonous chant, which enabled the speaker to make himself heard with comparative ease at a great distance.

[3] This must be understood generally for the *day time*, as it was then afternoon.—T.

Not I nought why, that me were lever slepe,
Than the beste galoun wyn that is in Chepe.'
'Well,' quod the Maunciple, 'if that I may doon
To the, sir cook, and to no wight displease, [ease
Which that her rydeth in this compaignye,
And our host wolde of his curteisie,
I wol as now excuse the of thy tale;
For in good faith thi visage is ful pale.
Thyn eyen daswen eek, al so me thinkith,
And wel I woot, thy breth ful foule stynkith,
That scheweth eek thou art nought wel disposid;
Of me certeyn thou schalt nought ben i-glosed.
Se how he ganith, lo! this dronken wight!
As though he wolde swolwe us anoon right.
Hold clos thy mouth, man, by thy fader kynne!
The devel of helle sette his foot therinne!
Thy cursed breth enfecten[1] wil us alle.
Fy, stynkyng swyne! foule mot the falle!
A! takith heed, sires, of this lusty man.
Now, swete sir, wol ye joust atte fan?[2]
Therto, me thinkith, ye beth right wel i-schape,
I trowe that ye dronken han wyn of ape,[3]

---

[1] *Enfecten* is Tyrwhitt's reading, and seems plainer than *effecte*, which is that of the Harl. MS. Both, however, have the same meaning.

[2] The Maunciple asks him ironically whether he will joust at the fan, vane, or quintaine, a ring turning on a pivot on the top of a pole, like a weathercock or vane. To drive the lance through this ring while at full gallop, and draw it out again as it turned, required great accuracy of eye and dexterity of hand.

[3] This expression is well illustrated by Tyrwhitt and Warton from a curious rabbinical tradition, quoted by Fabricius, *Cod. Pseudepigr. Vet. Test.*, vol. i. p. 275, which forms the substance of the 159th chapter of the *Gesta Romanorum*. When Noah planted the vine, Satan attended, and sacrificed a sheep, a lion, an ape, and a sow. These animals were intended to symbolize the gradations of ebriety; and the passage cannot be better illustrated than by an excellent Bacchanalian song in the play of *Mother Bombie*, by John Lily (1598), published in the *Songs from the Dramatists*. This song rather improves upon the original by substituting the goat for the sheep:—

'O the dear blood of grapes
Turns us to antic shapes,
Now to show tricks *like apes*,

And that is whan men playen with a straw.'
And with his speche the Cook wax angry and wraw,
And on the Maunciple bygan he nodde fast
For lak of speche; and doun the hors him cast,
Wher as he lay, til that men him up took.
This was a fair chivache[1] of a cook!
Allas! that he nad hold him by his ladil!
And er that he agayn were in his sadil,
Ther was gret schowvyng bothe to and fro
To lift him up, and moche care and wo,
So unwelde was this sory pallid gost.
And to the Maunciple thanne spak oure Host:
'Bycause drink hath dominacioun
Upon this man, by my salvacioun
I trow he lewedly tel wol his tale.
For were it wyn, or old moysty ale,
That he hath dronk, he spekith in his nose,
And snesith fast, and eek he hath the pose.
He also hath to do more than y-nough
To kepe him and his capil out of the slough;
And if he falle fro his capil eftsone,
Than schal we alle have y-nough to doone
In liftyng up his hevy dronken cors.
Tel on thy tale, of him make I no fors.
But yit, Maunciple, in faith thou art to nyce,
Thus openly reproeve him of his vice;
Another day he wil, *par adventure*,
Reclayme the, and bringe the to lure;[2]

Now *lion like* to roar,
Now *goatishly* to whore,
Now *hoggishly* in the mire.'

The *Calendrier des Bergers*, quoted by Tyrwhitt, describes the effect of wine on persons of different temperaments by the same tradition. It says the choleric *a vin de lion*; c'est a dire, quant a bien beu, veult tanser, noyer, et battre; the sanguine *a vin de singe*, quant a plus beu, tant est plus joyeux. The phlegmatic is said to have *vin de mouton*, and the melancholic, *vin de porceau*.

[1] Meaning, 'feat of horsemanship.'

[2] That is, As men reclaim and bring a hawk to the fist, he will tame and make you submissive by threatening to disclose your malpractices

I mene, he speke wol of smale thinges,
As for to pynchyn at thy rekenynges,
That were not honest, if it cam to pref.'
Quod the Maunciple, 'That were a gret meschief;
So might he lightly bringe me in the snare.
Yit had I lever payen for the mare
Which he ryt on, than he schuld with me stryve.
I wil not wrath him, al so mot I thrive!
That that I spak, I sayd it in my bourde.
And wite ye what? I have heer in a gourde
A draught of wyn, is of a ripe[1] grape,
And right anoon ye schal se a good jape.
This cook schal drinke therof, if I may;
Up peyn of deth he wol nought say me nay.'
And certeinly, to tellen as it was,
Of this vessel the cook dronk fast, (allas!
What needid it? he drank y-nough biforn);
And whan he hadde pouped in his horn,
To the Maunciple he took the gourd agayn.
And of that draught the Cook was wonder fayn,
And thanked him in such wise as he couthe.
Than gan our Host to laughe wonder louthe,
And sayd, 'I se wel it is necessarie
Wher that we go good drynk with us to carie;
For that wol torne rancour and desese[2]
To accord and love, and many a wrong apese,
O thou Bacus, i-blessid be thin name,
That so canst torne ernest into game!
Worschip and thonke be to thy deite!
Of that matier ye get no more of me.
Tel on thi tale, Mauncipel, I the pray.'
'Wel, sir,' quod he, 'now hearkyn what I say.'

---

in the execution of your office as maunciple or caterer. The Maunciple, being conscious of his vulnerability on that point, immediately endeavours to conciliate him.

[1] The riper the grape the richer and stronger the wine.

[2] Tyrwhitt's reading has been adopted in preference to that of the Harl. MS., *many racour pere*, which is evidently corrupt.

THE MAUNCIPLES TALE.

[THE original story upon which this tale is founded is related by Ovid, *Metam.*, lib. ii. 530. It appears to have been a favourite with mediæval writers of fable, and is told by Gower and many other collectors. Tyrwhitt justly observes that Chaucer's 'skill in new dressing an old story was never, perhaps, more successfully exerted.' There is something indescribably ludicrous in meeting Phœbus, whom we have hitherto known as the *Apollo Belvidere*, in the character of an uxorious husband and substantial householder, who keeps a pet crow in a cage for his diversion. A comparison with the original will well repay the trouble, showing as it does the strange metamorphosis which the story has undergone in Chaucer's hands. Nobody ever denied Ovid wit; but it is of that superficial kind which delights in playing upon words, and can never resist the temptation of a verbal conceit on the most serious occasions. Chaucer's wit, on the contrary, has a profounder reach, and exhibits magical power of calling up, in the gravest moods, scenes and circumstances the most grotesque, incongruous, and unexpected, which are, nevertheless, always true to nature.]

WHAN Phebus duelt her in this erthe adoun,
As olde bookes maken mencioun,
He was the moste lusty bachiler
Of al this world, and eek the best archer.
He slough Phiton the serpent, as he lay
Slepyng agayn the sonne upon a day;
And many another noble worthy dede
He with his bowe wrought, as men may rede.
Pleyen he couthe on every mynstralcye,
And syngen, that it was a melodye
To heren of his clere vois the soun.
Certes the kyng of Thebes, Amphioun,[1]

[1] Dictus et Amphion, Thebanæ conditor arcis,
Saxa movere sono testudinis, et prece blandâ
Ducere quo vellet.—HOR. *Ep. ad Pisones*, 394.

That with his singyng wallid that citee,
Couth never synge half so wel as he.
Therto he was the semlieste man,
That is or was, siththen the world bigan.
What nedith it his fetures[1] to descrive?
For in this worlde, is noon so faire on lyve.
He was therwith fulfild of gentilesce,
Of honour, and of parfyt worthinesse.
This Phebus, that was flour of bachilerie,
As wel in fredom, as in chivalrie,
For to disport, in signe of victorie
Of Phiton, so as telleth us the storie,
Was wont to bere in his hond a bowe.
Now had this Phebus in his hous a crowe,
Which in a cage he fostred many a day,
And taught it speken, as men doon a jay.
Whit was this crowe, as is a snow-whyt swan,
And countrefete the speche of every man
He couthe, whan he schulde telle a tale.
Ther is withinne this world no nightingale
Necouthe by an hundred thousand del
Singe so wonder merily and wel.
Now had this Phebus in his hous a wyf,
Which that he loved more than his lif,
And night and day did evermor diligence
Hir for to please, and doon hir reverence;
Sauf oonly, if the soth that I schal sayn,
Jalous he was, and wold have kept hir fayn,
For him were loth bijaped for to be;
And so is every wight in such degre;
But al for nought, for it availeth nought.
A good wyf, that is clene of werk and thought,
Schuld not be kept in noon awayt, certayn;
And trewely the labour is in vayn

[1] Mr. Wright has substituted *fetures* from the Lansd. MS. for *forme*, the reading of the Harl.; and in the next line, *noon so faire on ive*, for *noon such on lyve*.

To kepe a schrewe, for it wil nought be;
This hold I for a verray nycete,
To spille labour for to kepe wyves;
Thus olde clerkes writen in her lyves.
But now to purpos, as I first bigan.
This worthi Phebus doth al that he can
To pleasen hir, wenyng by such plesaunce,
And for his manhod and his governaunce,
That no man schuld han put him fro hir grace.
But, God it woot, ther may no man embrace
As to distreine[1] a thing, the which nature
Hath naturlley set in a creature.
Tak any brid, and put him in a cage,[2]
And do al thin entent, and thy corrage,
To foster it tenderly with mete and drynk,
And with alle the deyntees thou canst think,
And keep it al so kyndly as thou may;
Although his cage of gold be never so gay,
Yit hath this brid, by twenty thousand fold,
Lever to be in forest, wyld and cold,
Gon ete wormes, and such wrecchidnes,
For ever this brid wil doon his busynes
To scape out of his cage whan he may;
His liberte the brid desireth aye.
Let take a cat,[3] and foster him wel with mylk
And tender fleisch, and mak his bed of silk,
And let him see a mous go by the wal,
Anoon he wayveth mylk and fleisch, and al,
And every deynte which is in that hous,
Such appetit hath he to ete the mous.

---

[1] *Distreine* has been adopted from Tyrwhitt in preference to *destroy*. Harl. MS., or *discryve*, Lansd. MS. This sentiment recals Horace's 'Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret.'

[2] The same image occurs before in *The Squiers Tale*.

[3] Tyrwhitt says that this thought is imitated from the *Roman de la Rose*. That of the she-wolf is taken from the same source:—

'Tout ainsi comme fait la louve,
Que sa folie tant empire,
Qu'elle prent de tous loups le pire.'

Lo, heer hath kynd his dominacioun,
And appetit flemeth discretioun.
Al so a sche wolf hath a vilayns kynde;
The lewidest wolf that sche may fynde,
Or lest of reputacioun, him wol sche take
In tyme whan hir lust to have a make.
Alle this ensamples tel I by this men
That ben untrewe, and nothing by wommen.
For men have ever a licorous appetit
On lower thing to parforme her delit
Than on her wyves, ben thay never so faire,
Ne never so trewe, ne so debonaire.
Fleissch is so newfangil, with meschaunce,
That we can in no thinge have plesaunce
That souneth into vertu eny while.
This Phebus, which that thought upon no gile,
Deceyved was for al his jolite;
For under him another hadde sche,
A man of litil reputacioun,
Nought worth to Phebus in comparisoun.
Mor harm it is; it happeth ofte so;
Of which ther cometh bothe harm and woo.
And so bifel, whan Phebus was absent,
His wif anoon hath for hir lemman sent.
Hir lemman? certes, this is a knavisch speche;
Forgiveth it me, and that I yow biseche.
The wise Plato saith, as ye may rede,
The word mot neede accorde with the dede,[1]
If men schal telle propurly a thing,
The word mot corde with the thing werkyng.
I am a boystous man, right thus say I;
There is no difference trewely
Bytwix a wyf that is of heigh degre,
(If, of hir body dishonest sche be)
And a pore wenche, other then this,
(If so be thay werke bothe amys)

[1] See vol. i. p. 107, note 2.

But that the gentil in estat above
Sche schal be cleped his lady as in love;
And, for that other is a pore womman,
Sche schal be cleped his wenche and his lemman;
And, God it wot, my goode lieve brother,
Men layn that oon as lowe as lith that other.
Right so betwixe a titleles[1] tirant
And an outlawe, or a thef erraunt,
The same I say, there is no difference,
(To Alisaunder told was this sentence)
But, for the tiraunt is of greter might
By force of meyne for to sle doun right,
And brenne hous and home, and make al playn,
Lo, therfor is he cleped a capitayn;
And, for an outlawe hath no smal meyne,
And may not doon so gret an harm as he,
Ne bringe a contre to so gret meschief,
Men clepen him an outlawe or a theef.[2]
But, for I am not a man texted wel,
I wil not telle of textes never a del;
I wol go to my tale, as I bigan.
Whan Phebus wyf had sent for hir lemman,
Anon thay wroughten al her wil volage.
This white crow, that heng alway in cage,
Bihild her werk, and sayde never a word.
And whan that hom was come Phebus the lord,
This crowe song, 'Cuckow, cuckow, cuckow!'[3]
'What? brid,' quod Phebus, 'what song syngistow now?
Ne were thou wont so merily to synge,
That to myn hert it was a rejoysynge
To here thi vois? allas! what song is this?'
'By God,' quod he, 'I synge not amys.
Phebus,' quod he, 'for al thy worthynes,
For al thy beaute and thy gentiles,

[1] Tyrwhitt's reading, *titleles*, is adopted here in preference to *atticles* that of the Harl. MS., or *titles*, that of the Harl.

[2] This would have been dangerous doctrine in the reign of Henry IV.

[3] See the song of Ver in *Love's Labour Lost*.

For alle thy songes, and thy menstralcie,
For al thy waytyng, blered is thin ye,
With oon of litel reputacioun,
Nought worth to the as in comparisoun
The mountauns of a gnat, so mot I thrive;
For on thy bed thy wif I saugh him swyve.'
What wol ye more? the crowe anoon him tolde,
By sadde toknes, and by wordes bolde,
How that his wyf had doon hir leccherie,
Him to gret schame, and to gret vilonye;
And told him oft he saugh it with his yen.
This Phebus gan away-ward for to wryen;
Him thought his sorwful herte brast on tuo.
His bowe he bent, and sett therin a flo;
And in his ire he hath his wif i-slain;
This is theffect, ther is no more to sayn.
For sorw of which he brak his menstralcye,
Bothe harp and lute, gitern, and sauterie;
And eek he brak his arwes, and his bowe;
And after that thus spak he to the crowe;
'Traytour,' quod he, 'with tunge of scorpioun,
Thow hast me brought to my confusioun;
Allas that I was born! why nere I deed?
O dere wyf, O gemme of lustyhed,
That were to me so sad, and eek so trewe,
Now list thou deed, with face pale of hewe,
Ful gulteles, that dorst I swere I wis.
O racle hond, to do so foule amys.
O trouble wit, O ire recheles,
That unavysed smytest gulteles.
O wantrust, ful of fals suspeccioun,
Wher was thy wit and thy discrecioun?
O, every man be ware of raclenesse,
Ne trowe no thing withoute gret witnesse.
Smyt nought to soone, er that thou wite why,
And be avysed wel and sobrely,
Er ye doon eny execucion
Upon your ire for suspeccioun.

Allas! a thousand folk hath racle ire
Fordoon, or Dun hath brought hem in the myre.[1]
Allas! for sorw I wil myselven sle.'
And to the crowe, 'O false theef,' sayd he,
'I wil the quyt anoon thy false tale.
Thow songe whilom as any nightyngale,
Now schaltow, false thef, thy song forgoon,
And eek thy white fetheres, everichoon,
Ne never in al thy lyf ne schaltow speke;
Thus schal men on a fals theef ben awreke.
Thou and thin ofspring ever schulne be blake,
Ne never sweete noyse schul ye make,
But ever crye agayn tempest[2] and rayn,
In tokenyng that thurgh the my wyf was slayn.'
And to the crowe he stert, and that anoon,
And puld his white fetheres everychoon,
And made him blak, and raft him al his song,
And eek his speche, and out at dore him slong
Unto the devel, which I him bytake;
And for this cause ben alle crowes blake.
Lordyngs, by this ensample, I yow pray,
Beth war, and taketh kepe what ye say;
Ne tellith never man in al youre lif,
How that another man hath dight his wyf;
He wol you hatin mortelly certeyn.
Daun Salamon,[3] as wise clerkes seyn,
Techeth a man to kepe his tonge wel.
But, as I sayd, I am nought tixted wel;
But natheles thus taughte me my dame;
'My sone, thenk on the crowe, in Goddes name.

---

[1] A proverbial expression, applied apparently to persons who have got into a scrape, and derived, as Mr. Wright asserts, from a game in use as late as the seventeenth century. Tyrwhitt quotes from *Ray's Proverbial Similes*, 'As dull as Dun in the mire.' Thus, also, in *Romeo and Juliet*:—

'If thou art Dun, we'll draw thee from the mire.'

This is an example of the rule laid down in the Introduction, that French words in Chaucer are always to be accented on the last syllable. *Tempest* must be accented like *tempête*.

[3] Prov. xxi. 23.

My son, keep wel thy tonge, and kep thy frend;
A wicked tonge is worse than a feend;
My sone, fro a feend men may hem blesse.[1]
My sone, God of his endeles goodnesse
Wallid a tonge with teeth, and lippes eek,
For man schal him avyse what he speek.
My sone, ful ofte for to mochil speche
Hath many a man be spilt, as clerkes teche;
But for a litil speche avisily
Is no man schent, to speke generally.
My sone, thy tonge scholdest thou restreigne
At alle tyme, but whan thou dost thy peyne
To speke of God in honour and prayere.
The firste vertue,[2] sone, if thou wilt lere,
Is to restreigne and kepe wel thy tonge;
Thus lerne clerkes, whan that thay ben yonge.[4]
My sone, of mochil speking evel avised,
Ther lasse speking had y-nough suffised,
Cometh mochil harm; thus was me told and taught;
In mochel speche synne wantith nought.
Wost thou wherof a racle tonge serveth?
Right as a swerd for-kutteth and for-kerveth
An arm atuo, my dere sone, right so
A tonge cutteth frendschip al atuo.
A jangler is to God abhominable.
Red Salomon, so wys and honurable.
Red David in his Psalmes, reed Senek.
My sone, speke not, but with thy heed thou bek,
Dissimul as thou were deed, if that thou heere
A jangler speke of perilous mateere.

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[1] Meaning, 'Men may defend themselves from the power of the devil by making the sign of the cross.'

[2] In the *Roman de la Rose* this precept is quoted from *Ptolomie*.—T.

[3] This precept is also quoted in the *Roman de la Rose*, from *Cato*. It is extant in lib. i. dist. 3:—

'Virtutem primam esse puta compescere linguam.'—T.

[4] In explanation of this passage, Mr. Wright observes that the *Disticha* was one of the first books put into the hands of students in the middle ages.

The. Flemyng saith, and lere it if the lest,
That litil jangling causeth mochil rest.[1]
My sone, if thou no wikked word hast sayd,
The thar not drede for to be bywrayd;
But he that hath myssayd, I dar wel sayn,
He may by no way clepe his word agayn.
Thing that is sayd is sayd, and forth it goth,[2]
Though him repent, or be him never so loth,
He is his thral, to whom that he hath sayd
A tale, of which he is now yvel apayd.
My sone, be war, and be noon auctour newe[3]
Of tydyngs, whether thay ben fals or trewe;
Wher so thou comest, amonges heih or lowe,
Kep wel thy tonge, and thenk upon the crowe.[4]

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[1] This proverb is still in use. 'Of little meddling comes great ease.'

[2] Et semel emissum volat irrevocabile verbum.
HOR. *Ep.* lib. i. xviii. 17.

[3] This seems to be from *Cato*, lib. i. dist. 12:—
'Rumores fuge, ne incipias novus auctor haberi.'
It looks as if Chaucer read *Rumoris* fuge.—T.

[4] Before the Prologue to *The Persones Tale* there appears in Speght and subsequent editions, under the title of *The Plowman's Tale*, a fierce satire on the vices of the clergy. It is rejected by Tyrwhitt, who says, that in the edition of 1542, where it was first printed, it was placed after *The Persones Tale*, and that the only account which we have of any MS. of it is from Speght, who, in a note prefixed to it, says that he had 'seene it in written hand in John Stowe's librarie, in a booke of such antiquitie as seems to have been written near to Chaucer's time.' Tyrwhitt adds, 'He does not say that it was among *The Canterbury Tales*, or that it had Chaucer's name to it. We can, therefore, only judge of it by the internal evidence, and upon that I have no scruple to declare my own opinion, that it has not the least resemblance to Chaucer's manner either of writing or thinking in his other works.' The evidence, external and internal, is so strong against the authenticity of *The Plowman's Tale*, as to justify its rejection from this edition.

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